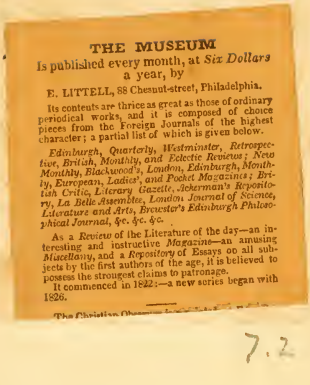

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Is published every month, at *Six Dollars* a year, by

E. LITTELL, 88 Chesnut-street, Philadelphia.

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The Christian Observer [illegible]

7.2.102

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ETCHINGS

FROM

THE RELIGIOUS WORLD.

By THOMAS CHARLTON HENRY, D.D.
Late Pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church, Charleston, S. C.

When I bethink me of that speech whylear,
Of *Mutability*, and well it weigh:
Me seems, that though she all unworthy were
Of the Heaven's rule; yet very sooth to say,
In all things else she bears the greatest sway.
Which makes me loath this state of life so tickle,
And love of things so vain and cast away;
Whose flowering pride, so fading and so fickle,
Short *Time* shall soon cut down with his consuming sickle.

Then 'gin I think on that which Nature said,
Of that same time when no more change shall be,
But stedfast rest of all things firmly stayd
Upon the pillaurs of *Eternity*,
That is contrayr to Mutability:
For all that moveth doth in change delight,
But thenceforth all shall rest eternally
With him that is the God of Sabaoth hight:
Oh that great Sabaoth God, grant me that Sabaoth's sight.

SPENCER.

CHARLESTON:
OBSERVER OFFICE PRESS.

SOLD BY D. W. HARRISON, CHARLESTON—E. LITTELL, PHILADELPHIA—JOHN P. HAVEN, N. YORK—CROCKER AND BREWSTER, BOSTON.

1828.

District of South Carolina.

(**L. S.**) *Be it remembered*, That on the Fifth day of December, A. D. 1827, and in the fifty-second year of the Independence of the United States of America, the Rev. Samuel S. S. Davis deposited in this office the title of a book the right whereof he claims as proprietor, in the words following, to wit:

"Etchings from the Religious World. By Thomas Charlton Henry, D. D. late Pastor of the 2d Presbyterian Church, Charleston, S. C."

In conformity to the Act of Congress of the United States, entitled "An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books to the Authors and Proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned"—And also an Act entitled "An Act supplementary to an Act, entitled 'An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books to the Authors and Proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned, and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving and etching historical and other prints."

JAMES JERVEY, District Clerk.

To ————, *Esq.*

My Dear Sir,

——Why should we destroy the notes of the day? Some ten years hence, they would enable us to act our part again in the scenes of the past. And if there be too much pain in the re-creation of things that have perished, to be counter-balanced by the pleasure they offer; the gold of experience, for which we paid so dear, is worthy of preservation. It is passable coin. Our judgement never refuses it.

Let me tell you, I love to hoard together the communications which make up a chronicle of the great and little events of life. They may be of little worth in the hour for which they were intended; but they grow richer by preservation than any thing else that age improves. They have power to recal the seasons to which they belonged. Every line revokes matters and men. A single word——and the eye al-

ways catches that particular word——summons manner and place, *riant* or *sombre*, cheerful or sad, as they were. It does more. It introduces them without the duskiness which our own selfish part had thrown around them. We see what has been, as it was. We are too disinterested, when it has so far gone by, to be blinded by our personal prepossessions or policy.——And when these ten years or any other good round number that you will, is completed, if there be a moment in life when truth is most unshackled in her agency, it is when we look over such a pile of life's monuments.——It is in the very article of such doing that I have been, for hours, engaged. And, verily, I have been more deeply affected than ever by the soberest realities before. You may smile when I say it, but there is a natural getting up, and a natural keeping,—as artists speak,—in this retrospect, for which I was hardly prepared. I find myself in an indefinable mood. I see the past with a distinctness which fancy assimilates to our sight of things when we shall be in eternity. Where in the dealings of intercourse I have been wrong, I am confounded at my folly. I can see in the mountain of evil the gradual up-building—the first grain of sand that commenced its formation. Where I have

been useful, I can discover the workmanship of a hand that was then invisible. What *was*, existed in temporary colours, like writing in sympathetic ink; and it had departed with its colouring. But here was a chymical process that restored the whole to shape again. In five minutes I shifted the scenes of months. In five more, the ratio was trebled: For there is an "attraction of aggregation" in moral as well as in physical science.——

There is not a circumstance connected with this pile of papers which is too indifferent to awaken emotion.—Even that letter, which I have just destined to the flames, as the most immaterial part of the past, gave rise to a multitudinous association of thought. The writer, it is true, never awakened much interest in my bosom: and we never exchanged any other communications than those of business or form. But then, this is the latest trace that remains of him. He was one who made up part of a circle in which I moved. And that circle is dissolved. It parted and melted away, like all that is of artificial or natural light. The next I shall know of that man will be in a world of spirits. There is something painful in destroying this vestige. It hastens him into oblivion. I am so much more insulated, myself.——

Such was the fate of some fifty such sheets. But there was not one of them that did not point out some spots in my pilgrimage, to which I could trace events that have borne on my present circumstances, or on my disposition and temper. How distinctly can I see that the greatest concerns in life—concerns which form a part of our moral being, arise from little springs, like the mightiest rivers of our earth. How plainly do I observe that every thing is a link—or at least a component part of a link,—in the history of religious experience———— Those sheets are consuming before me. The flame which wrapt them, is flickering in its last blue shade of colour, upon some warping fragment that shrinks up, and passes away, as the light cinders that ascended before it.———— There go the mementos of years!—The chain of the past is broken.—The absent are to be forgotten until I meet them again. The deeds between us have gone up already: The hour of each, returned unto Him who spoke time into being, and deposited before him all it had gathered.——

Part of my existence seems stricken off:—For, despite of us, oblivion of the past seems to diminish the scale of our being: The memory of what *was*, makes more than a fanciful portion of the *ens præsentis*.——

" Our own affairs are of magnitude to us, if they are so to no one else. While I turned from the lost pile, it seemed to leave much such a monument to my credit, as the baths of Alexandria did to that of Omar :—Self-love is pleased in comparing little things with great.

Now what has all this to do with the packet I send you ? You shall hear : A folded sheet, which had been read again and again, laid on the top of the yet unsentenced mass of papers. Its seal had not been fractured in opening.—The moment I cast my eye on the impression, and read *Je ne change q'en mourant,* an array of thoughts, pressing, conflicting, and painful, stood before me. The *catchet* had a charm to revive reflections which I had condemned to forgetfulness. *Je ne change q'en mourant,* was a pretty conceit which vanity made for friendship—which was intended to pass as a sentiment, (a thing that in modes of life means not much,) but which the receiver from one whom he loved, would credit to its utmost ; just as our vanity loves to credit the first salutation of a letter, and its final subscription, although the writer may mean nothing in either.

I could not escape from the crowd of living reflections which pressed upon me, while I held

this sheet in my hands. I read the signature—I involuntarily pronounced the name with all the familiarity of former days. The ear, as well as the eye, has its fancy. I heard the same manly voice, once used to answer, sounding again.

A thought occurred to me, in practical character: and to that thought you owe the packet which travels in company with these lines.—'Might I not detain, and pinion down, much that once was present, and which this hour has remanded again?' I do not wish to live over *all* the past: who does?—I do not wish to preserve any thing of autobiography, excepting so far as the reprieve of certain sheets will do so, for my own musings, and, let me add, for my own benefit. But somebody has said, that, "a record of our thoughts as they occur might be digested into something of value." And any body *might* say, that, a record of what thousands of us have witnessed—"the merest deeds of the day"—would be of greater worth; just so far as example is a better teacher and a better disciplinarian than precept. Many a tale that was of private interest, and that was replete with instruction, and that deserved to live, is entombed with its witnesses and actors.

I have reached my point at last.—I determined to enclose with certain strokes of the pen, pictures of some things as they were; to secure them before they and their moral escaped. Yet there was a difficulty in my way. To be able even to say "*quorum pars fui*," is an incidental affair. But to tell the thing as it was, so as to present it to the eye of a friend, exactly as it met our own, is not so easy a task. It may be freshened to our own sight by the record we have made. But it is because we have auxiliaries that supply all that was wanting in *effect:* and these it is not in our power to transfer to another. The verisimilitude of matter may be communicated: but the mind cannot impart its impressions so easily: and our world would be strangely altered if it could.

But there was another obstacle in my way: I knew my incompetency to describe a scene of feeling. There is a talent in the *filling up*, which, if I dared covet, I would have almost envied others. On the other hand, there was some compensation for this defect: It was *truth* which I had to relate: and it is truth which I have told. If there be any exterior embellishment, it will not deceive you, who will easily discern it. If the reasoning or

argument, in colloquy, is not always *seriatim*—and I mention this under the peradventure that it *might* reach the observation of some concerned—why then, I have only to plead against the charge of error, that any slight alteration here, or even an important one, cannot affect the outline of the story. To the allegation that I have disguised the names of persons and places, I am amenable; and I can the more freely confess it, as I see no great guilt in the act. Had I done otherwise, I had unwarrantably obtruded on privacies which no man may justifiably violate: and all that is likely to be useful in my design, might be effected equally well without it.

I have been the rather induced to undertake these etchings,—and to annex to them such reflections as occurred in the moments of execution—because I have often observed that the simplest facts in life fling a brightness around the Word of God, and render its sacred truths more distinct and defined: while that volume, in its turn, interprets the lesson which these facts convey. Many of them have passed within the scope of my remembrance as episodes in life; and I cannot consent to forget them. They are sometimes painful; yet I could not weep over one of them now. They have left a

species of thoughtfulness which presents a perfect antagonism to tears.

It is not impossible that in the present and future series of these etchings, you may find some answers to the cavils and excuses of the natural heart—some clue to prevalent self-deceptions—some exposition of theoretical and practical errors in religion—some developements of truth—and some hints to the Christian, which belong rather to the discursiveness of my subjects, than to what are deemed the more stately and less familiar topics of the pulpit.

The scenes are laid where they belonged: in my native country. Certain little things of manner and custom will indicate this. But that indication will be more complete in the allusions to those extraordinary seasons of spiritual blessing, with which our churches are sometimes visited; seasons which are known to you only by report, and that report generally defective and unsatisfactory.

THE TWO PRISONERS.

"Ay, but to die, and go we know not where;
"To lie in cold obstruction, and to rot:
————"or to be worse than worst
"Of those, that lawless and incertain thoughts
"Imagine howling!——'tis too horrible!
"The weariest and most loathed worldly life,
"That age, ach, penury, and imprisonment
"Can lay on nature, is a paradise
"To what we fear of death."

"I cannot doff all human fear.
"I know this greeting is severe
"To this poor shell of clay.
"Yet come, Oh Death! thy freezing kiss
"Emancipates! Thy rest is bliss.
"I would I were away!"

It is impossible to discover the character of religious affections by the operation of insulated events on the mind and feelings. And yet this position, though admitted in reasoning, is subject to a general denial in our practice. We readily attach suspicion to professions: but we derive conclusions which appear to us almost infallible from the effects which adversity produces upon the appearance and conduct. We hope for much when we see the

passions lulled by affliction: and yet it may have been only the shock which met and arrested them for the moment. Our confidence increases when an apparent subduement of temper has succeeded; and yet it may be the bending of a wounded selfishness, while neither resignation nor faith has taken part in the doing. There lives not a grace in the bosom of the Christian that has not its counterfeit. There is not a counterfeit which has not its hour of peculiar plausibility. It is to the uniform life of holiness, sifted by its variety of temptations, and exposed to its little as well as its greater ordeals, that we are to look for the essential evidence of a renewal of soul.

But this self deception reaches to our own experience as well as to our judgement of others. We attribute certain feelings to causes with which they have no connexion. We gather a confident hope from impulses whose beginnings and leadings are equivocal. Nay, the very mood of mind in which we are, has its office and its power: And, even when it has passed by, leaves its flattering encouragement in the remembrance of its effects.

It is no wonder, then, that the dying sinner sometimes extends the delusion that exists in his own heart, to that of the credulous obser-

ver: or that the sick should display what may be so easily taken for the proof of a radical change. It is false that,

"A Death bed 's a detector of the heart,"

or that here

"Tired Dissimulation drops the mask:"

We may be dishonest to ourselves until "the silver cord is loosed," and the spirit enters a world where falsehood can play her part no more. The Peripatetic who defined hope, "the dream of a waking man," might have extended his meaning to the spiritual interest of thousands, who continue to hope, with all the fallacy of a nightly vision, until the astounding realities of eternity break on the senses. And he who said of truth, that it was "Heaven-born, with numberless counterfeits on earth," little knew how extensive was the application of his remark to concerns of infinite moment.

At a late hour in the night, a note was once put into my hands, from the keeper of a prison in the neighbouring street of the city. It contained a request to visit two young men, who were under sentence of death, and who were expected to pay the penalty of a violated law on the ensuing morning. The illness of the Clergyman who ordinarily officiated as Chap

lain, and the earnest desire of the prisoners, whom I had once before visited, furnished inducements to my compliance.

It was a melancholy errand, although it was one of mercy. The uninterrupted stillness of the night, the unseasonableness of the time, and the nature of my visit, conspired together to produce confused and uneasy sensations. And, when I arrived at the gate of the prison, I had some reason to suspect myself of default in that great ingredient of an acceptable sacrifice—cheerfulness in the offering.

The Turnkey, whose orders had prepared him to expect me, led the way through the great hall of the dreary building to the massive door, which separated the interior from the publick gaze. Having traversed a narrow passage, and descended a flight of stone steps, we found ourselves in the range of solitary cells. The grating of hinges once more over, we were enclosed within the confinement of "The Two Prisoners." For some reason, not now recollected, the ordinary rule of the prison had been waved, and the partners in crime had been kept together, from the period of their sentence.

An earthen pitcher, and an unbroken loaf of brown bread, were on a table in the centre of

the stone floor. Two beds of straw, with their woollen coverings, completed the furniture of the apartment. Near the ceiling, a small, thick-grated window, which served rather to ventilate than to light, and a heavy ring fastened to the floor, were all else, apart from the culprits, on which the sight might have rested.

"And so here," thought I, "is part payment of 'the wages of sin:' Sin that might have begun its debtorship, insensibly, with the guilty, in mere imaginings, before a purpose was fledged or formed: that went on from fancy, to purpose, and to act: from the smaller deed, that most startled an active conscience, to the bolder transgression, in which the conscience is inert. And yet this is only an earnest of full payment. Tomorrow the debtor is to begin his full discharge. Six hours to come,—and nights and days are to be numbered no more. Six hours—and the ear shall tingle with the sounds of eternity.—And these hours are passing with a fleetness that seems merciless and horrible"

The prisoners had risen on our entrance. Each was sitting at the foot of his pallet.—The dim light of the lantern was just sufficient to read an expression of countenance which is seldom unmarked on such an occasion. There was a striking difference between the two

young men. The wild stare, and fallen countenance of one, was the very personification of despair. The eye of the other, was moistened and mild: his forehead was smooth: and his whole features evinced a frame of mind contented, if not happy.

A month before, this was not so. There had been strong expectations of a reprieve. Much interest had been used; and many palliating circumstances had been presented, to effect a pardon. But the Governor seemed inflexible. And for a week past, all inquiry on the part of the prisoners had been answered by a decided negative. It was this intelligence, so often confirmed, that brought the dispositions and tempers of both into visible exercise.

B———, was of an ardent and sanguine temperament. He had hoped much from the humanity of the jury, during his trial: and when the verdict of, "Guilty," was announced in the Court, though his heart sunk within him for the moment, he transferred his expectations to the clemency of the Executive: and the indulgence of his fancy had, in a fortnight, produced an assurance of ultimate safety. In the meanwhile, the doubts and fears of his friends were giving way to a conviction of hopelessness. The good Chaplain communi-

cated this melancholy news. And his daily visits were directed exclusively to the concerns of a future world. B——— reluctantly loosened his hold on earthly things; and suffered his attention to be drawn to the subject of his guilt and depravity. In a short time, he acknowledged the turpitude of his heart, the justice of the sentence which had been passed against him, and his desert of eternal death. And many and bitter were the tears which he shed, as he looked back on a life of impenitence and folly. He accused himself with a severity of expression that betokened indignation awakened against sin. He was astonished that divine mercy could be tendered to a wretch so vile as himself. He feared to apply invitations which appeared too gracious for one in his condition; for conscience rebutted them all with her full scroll of recorded crime.—Yet this conflict was short. For several days past, he had announced his belief in the "Friend of Sinners." He had thought of a Manasseh and a David, of an offending Ephraim, a polluted Mary, and a persecuting Saul. He saw the world as a theatre of Divine compassion, where the attribute of mercy had, times without number, triumphed over the power of guilt. And he was now ever ready to speak of the

peace-giving blood of Christ—of the exalted expectations which gladdened his own bosom—and of the joy which awaited his undeserving soul.

It was in this mood I found him. He took my hand, and, while he clasped it with fervour, expressed his gratitude for my visit. "It is the last," said he, "you will ever be called to pay me."

The tone in which he uttered this was neither plaintive nor strong; but it seemed to partake of both. And it was in concord with an expression of countenance which, of all others, I would have chosen for one who was on the borders of eternity. Had I not been apprized of this change, I should have been astonished at the appearance it exhibited: But now it was touching.—And who does not know that there are certain aspects of countenance which seem more unequivocal than the most plausible professions—and in sight of which we abandon our distrust under the dictate as well as the consent of our feelings?——

I sat down on the pallet by his side. I felt that I was addressing one who had been made a trophy of distinguishing grace: and whom, in a very few hours, that grace was

to welcome in Heaven. The distance between the two worlds grew less. The acclamations of joy, and the song of victory, were soon to be audible to one of us. My curiosity was awakened to know more of the sensations of a man, who seemed to be foregathering the feelings of an unearthly spirit; and whose very enthusiasm, in such an hour, appeared to have been collected from above. I asked,—"is your confidence in the Saviour never shaken?"

"Never now. I can trust in the sufficiency of his atonement. And I have no fear in committing my soul into his hands." "Do you think you have done any thing to merit pardon?" "No, sir, nothing. I know that I am the chief of sinners. My hope is entirely in Jesus Christ."

"If you were spared, would you devote your life to the cause of the Redeemer?"

As I proposed this question, the other prisoner started. He cast his eye full upon me with a visage of active anxiety, tempered with a ray of hope. B—— paid no attention to this; but replied with promptness, as if no interruption had been caused by the sudden clanking of his companion's chains: "I trust I should; my strength would be in the Saviour still. But I have no desire to be spared in the world any longer."

"Yet surely you would make no choice, apart from His will?"

"No, none. I am willing to go or stay; I do not pray for either."

"Is sin hateful in itself?"

"Yes, sir; without an idea of Hell it would be as loathsome as it is now."

"Can you admire God in the *justice* of his character?"

"I can, and do. If he cast me off forever, I think I should still see the excellence of his justice."

Such was the commencement of an hour's conversation with this youth. During this time I asked every question which seemed necessary to try the nature of his views, and to detect, if possible, any self-deception which he might be practising on his heart. Every answer was satisfactory, while in its manner it was modest and humble. I forgot the oppressive gloom of the apartment: or rather, hope had cheered and lighted it, while he described the operations of the Holy Spirit on his soul.

At the conclusion of this time he begged me to unite with him in a hymn of praise. I consented. And with a voice that was full

and clear, he struck up a tune to the following words:

Hark! hark! what sounds are these so pleasing!
Sinners, wipe the falling tear:
'Tis love divine, and never ceasing
Flows from Jesus to the ear.

"Come unto me all ye that labour;
"Sinners, heavy-laden, come;
"None are more welcome to the Saviour,
"Than the wretched and undone.

"No longer let the Tempter keep you
"Fast in chains of unbelief;
"Though late in life, the Word assures you
"Christ could save the dying Thief.

"Ho! all ye sinners heavy-laden,
"Fly to Christ—the Saviour's breast;
"Receive the pressing invitation;
"Come, and I will give you rest."

What a scene for the midnight hour of a dungeon! 'But God,' thought I, 'can establish the glory of his presence as well within the walls of the Criminal's cell, as in the courts of his Temple.'

The most painful part of my task remained to be accomplished. I approached the seat of the second culprit. His face was covered by his hands: and when I inquired into the state of his mind, at this awful juncture, he hardly lifted them to say—"I do'nt know."

"What a condition for a soul within a step of the Judgement-throne!" I exclaimed.

"Is there no hope?" said he,—with a wistful look, that seemed to search my very thoughts.

"There *is* hope, for the penitent and believing."

"No, not that—is there no hope of pardon?"

"None, except from Heaven."

"Oh God—Oh God!"——

"My dear Sir, reflect one moment"——

"I *cannot* reflect. I *dare* not think. If I consider the past, I see what *might* have been; and the past brings me shuddering to the present. If I think of the present—where am I? and who *can* think in such a condition?—If I reflect on the future——tomorrow——oh Sir, is there indeed no hope?

"I have already said, *no*. Let me advise you, as you value your soul, not to lose a moment of the little time before you. If you die in this state, you are lost forever."

"I know that. But I cannot feel it. I am confused. Every thing seems dark within and around me. That horrible execution haunts me ever. I cannot sleep. The first dozing only brings a dream of the crowd and the gallows. I collect myself again, and I say—*no, not yet*——For ten days past, I have counted the hours to lengthen time. And now I have been counting the minutes. Only three hun-

dred remain: no—less—since I have been talking to you—" "Let me beseech you to look to Jesus Christ. It is possible"——"No; nothing is possible.—My heart is heavy and cold as that stone. It sinks me down. My head grows dizzy. And I feel such a throbbing—— Oh what a dreadful thing it must be to die!"

"My dear Sir, you are wasting these precious minutes."

"I know it. I have been doing nothing else since I have been here. I have tried several times to pray: but I could see nothing before me, while I felt a dreadful moving within me. I know there is a Heaven and a Hell; but I cannot conceive of either. Every thing seems mixed up together. I cannot separate them."

I could easily conceive how a mind made up of subtle and tumultuous elements might be wrought into this half phrenzied action. Its powers were incapable of coherency, as I have seen the nerves of a powerful man, in an hour of peril. I knew the cause of all this. I could trace its progress. But I know no way to remove the evil. The case appeared remediless. There was but one chord of his heart that seemed susceptible of regular vibration. All the rest were loose and flaccid. And yet, touching this one could answer no good end.

What could be done? Entreaty and warning were mis-spent breath. The horrible and shapeless images, which flitted before this poor sufferer, were formed by his fancy from things of earth. And neither judgement nor imagination were to be moved one step beyond it. What an awful plunge into eternity was now to be taken! What an inconceivable moment when the rallied powers of the spirit were to resume their energies under the lash of remorse!

The interview ended with prayer. I know not how I addressed the throne of grace. I cannot well recollect the feelings of the occasion. But I know that they were warring.—We shook hands together and parted. The officer took up the light: and as he approached the door, and its shadow was covering the two prisoners; when I gave them a parting gaze, my soul seemed heavy within me; and I retraced my way with sensations which no man may choose for his own.

Then followed restless hours of feverish excitement. Every few minutes' dozing brought the prisoners before me. At one time, I saw them dying: the first, with a lovely smile: the second, in the convulsive throes of despair. At another time, I was intent on the vast con-

gregation assembled before the place of death. I watched their countenances. I read their emotions. And again, at another, I had visited the convicts again; and both were uniting in praise. And in all this, every thing was tangible and near. It was not "such stuff as dreams are made of," in common cases. The forms continued after my eyes were opened. I had to reason that these things were not as they appeared. So difficult may it be to remove the phantasms of an agitated mind.

At a late hour I arose. A messenger was awaiting me below. Judge my astonishment, when I found him a servant of the Superintendant with the news of a *reprieve!* This seemed as unreal now as the fanciful visions of the night.

It had been contemplated to communicate the intelligence on the scaffold. Until then, the officer to whom the reprieve had been sent, was directed, provisionally, to keep it undivulged. Certain reasons of expediency, arising, I think, from the state of the more unhappy prisoner, altered the arrangement. And at six o'clock—the hour fixed for the execution—the harbinger of good news entered the cell. To one of its tenants this was an awful moment; for he had fainted before the officer had spoken.

The other received the information with no visible emotion. He was calm and composed; uttered a half audible ejaculation of gratitude; and, without changing a feature, was conducted through the open air of the court yard, to the adjoining residence of the Superintendant's family.

Such was the information of the Messenger.

If this had been the conclusion of the story, I should have drawn no very distinct inference from it, excepting that of the sovereign mercy of Him whose favour may reach us in extremes. We should have had "the confessions of B——, for they were taken down at his own desire. We should have read the account of a remarkable conversion. And I could not have refused a verbal testimony of my own strong hopes, in favour of the penitent. Whatever untruths are uttered in similar instances, and however injudicious their dissemination may be, I should have rested on something almost as firm as assurance here.

Such were the reflections which occupied my mind, soon after the intelligence of pardon from the Executive.

A week afterwards, I met an evening party of pious acquaintances, at the house of a friend. Among these were two Clergymen of eminent

reputation for piety and acquirements. The conversation turned on "The Two Prisoners." I learnt that one of them had left the city on the night succeeding the news of his reprieve. B—— had been received into the house of the Superintendant: who, being a pious man, retained a sincere interest for his late charge. He had furnished him every possible means of instruction during his confinement; often conversed with him; and rejoiced as much as any, in the happy reverse of his prospects. To all this he added a more substantial proof of his good will, by making his own house the residence of his charge, until some means might be devised for his future support. "And during the past week," it was added, "his benefactor has expressed much satisfaction in his deportment and conversation. B—— has frequently led in family prayer; and his manner is devout, subdued and humble."

"What a change!"—said Miss O,—a sprightly young lady, who had listened with great apparent interest to the report of our informant—"A brand plucked from the fire!"

"I should not repose unlimited confidence in the change," said Mr. N——, one of the Clergymen present.

"But surely, Sir,"—said the young lady, in a voice that indicated feelings wounded by the doubt just expressed——"*you* can tell us enough to banish suspicions, which, to say the least, are painful?"

The appeal was to myself. I recounted the particulars of my memorable interview, as they had already been given. And I concluded with an expression of my own favourable feelings in behalf of B——.

"I confess," said Mr. N——, "there *is* something painful in the doubt I have suggested. And that doubt may need some apology, when I add, to all the testimony which has been given, my own acknowledgement that I have heard nothing prejudicial to our best hopes, on the subject. But you may account for my distrust, or for my want of the strong confidence which *you* entertain, when I say, that the expected approach of death has been the season of more delusion than any other in which I have been present. During a ministration of thirty years, I have known many who expressed flattering hopes on a death-bed; and who have departed, leaving a consolatory feeling in the breasts of surviving relatives. But it has been my lot to stand by the sick couch of many others, whose evidence of a spiritual change, effected there,

was quite as complete ; and yet not one of them carried that change into subsequent years."

Mr. A—— strengthened this statement, from his own observation: While I could not remember that any thing, within the range of mine, contradicted it:

"In the case of B——," continued Mr. N——, "I confess that my sympathies are all enlisted. But I am not without anxiety for the result. Time will tell us more, hereafter. In the meanwhile, he will be a subject of prayer with all of us. Yet I could go very little further. I would not like to say of any one, in whom a recent change has taken place, that I am persuaded of his stability. And in such an instance as this, though I would hope, it would be not without trembling. I do not doubt that B—— is satisfied of the transformation, in himself: For I attribute no deliberate hypocrisy to any one, in his circumstances. In a certain sense, I am always assured of sincerity there ; and even when time has removed these favourable appearances ; and the hitherto restrained passions have returned to their natural course, I would not join the world around me, in ascribing the past to affectation, or to any sinister design. But I know that the change which takes place near to "the article of death," or

in some other great exigency, is very liable to suspicion. Both the faith and repentance of such a season are apt to be spurious. Yet this self-persuasion of pardon and peace may create all the outward appearances which are visible in a true hope. A placid smile may play on the lips. A sweetness of expression may suffuse the whole countenance. And our own feelings, accordingly, are prepared to give the most favourable opinion. Our liability to mistake is plain, when we remember that true and fictitious graces will produce the same outward appearances, for the moment, in the living or dying."

"But when a friend has really deceased"—rejoined Miss O—"if that friend, on a sick bed, had indicated all those evidences which B—— has shewn, would you not trust that all is well with him now? for he could not return to the evils of the world." "I should have the same confidence, that I have this hour in B——, with the following difference: that in the former case, I should not be able to ascertain the truth in this world: in the latter, we may in a few months, or years at most, form some estimate of the true state of the heart. Had B——, been ushered into eternity on the day appointed for his execution, he would have been as much a Christian as he is now. If his

life and conversation be consistent with his present profession, our conclusion will fairly be, that, in the event of his death, he would have ascended where neither pain nor guilt is known. But should the reverse of this appear, our inference will be, that he would have taken his place among the spirits of the lost. If angels ever rejoiced in his new birth, they will continue to rejoice. Their pleasures will never be marred by disappointment. The rejoicings of Heaven are never for uncertainties.

"In such a time as a dying hour,"—asked one of the company,—"would not God prevent the operations of a deceitful heart? In man's last opportunity, would he not present the truth before his mind?"

"There is a mistaken idea usually attached to a dying hour"—said Mr. N——. "We easily connect with it something that is sacred; something of a peculiar nearness and readiness, in God. The very pain and suffering appear expiatory. So does remorse. Thus the consequences of sin are viewed as an atonement for it. All this is the deduction of feeling. The Bible does not encourage it: and there is no reason for it. We are as liable to be deceived at such a time as at any other. Perhaps more so. The mental stupor which takes

possession of many, is often mistaken for the calmness of evangelical peace. And the resignation of others—of which so much has been said—is the very essence of a legal temper—the utterance of what is not felt; or of what is forced upon the sufferer, by himself, as a task to procure the favour of God. Inertness of conscience, owing to the decline of the faculties, in a sinking frame, easily gives room for a delusive hope: and the dying man himself is satisfied because he has no painful reflections. Add to all this, the prevalent deceit of the imagination, as likely to operate now as ever."

"But I have not yet done"—continued Mr. N——. "A clear revelation of the truth is too frequently wanted. Even the feelings of the minister of the Gospel, who in other cases is faithful, often prevent his disturbing the sick, by questions that seem too close, or doctrines too discriminating. Many good men act here as if a *hint* were sufficient on the topics introduced; as if the approach of death would itself complete the lesson, and the mind were now quick in its apprehensions of truth. Hence the real state of the heart, and the true character of HIM with whom we have to do, are very little discussed. These are subjects which

seem too severe for the diseased, and which the circumstance of a supposed tenderness of conscience renders unnecessary. More gentleness—and gentleness of a mistaken nature—is deemed expedient to the sinner dying, than to the sinner in health."

"But, independently of this, the constitutional traits of the sick are most apt to come into play at such an hour. There are some men whose buoyancy of spirit will not permit them to sink long under sorrow. They either rise quickly to the surface again, by the aid of a ready fancy, or they shake off the superincumbent weight, as they escape to other, and different, reflections. Such men are deluded by their own vain imaginations, from the cradle to the grave. They never permit a deep sense of sin to affect the heart; while every other kind of grief is under some command. We find it hard to reach deep into the bosoms of such men: as we do to enter those of many who cherish *secret* views of their Maker, utterly unevangelical and false. Nor is this all: Friends who visit the couch of the dying attempt to lend their assistance to make the transition, from a state of Nature to one of Grace, more easy and quick. They bring in an artificial frame of mind, which satisfies both them-

selves and the dying, while it has nothing to do with the divine operations of faith. On the whole, I am persuaded, that instead of there being less danger of deception than in health, there is much more."

"There is"—said a gentleman who had been until this evening, a stranger to most of the company, but who with the rest of us, had by this time felt an increasing interest in the debate—"there is, you must allow, an eminent example of mercy in a dying hour, in the Thief crucified with the Saviour?"

"There is, indeed. But it is an example of a very extraordinary character. If a case had been presented to us in the Bible, of one whom redeeming mercy reached in a dying hour after having ineffectually pursued him in former days, I should consider it a case in point. But not so here. The instance of the dying Thief proves the possibility of regeneration, in a last hour. And I would, therefore, never discourage any one at this critical period. I would present the mercy of Jesus Christ, as rich and free. I would never permit the flame of hope to go out, while that of life continued burning. I know the power of God; and desire to be the last who could deny the fulness of his compassion. I am willing to believe too, that other,

and if you please, that *many* other examples of wonder-working grace, in a death season, may have been witnessed in a sin-stricken world. But that these displays of sovereignty are more rare than our feelings would lead us to believe, is to me equally plain. The dying Thief was an actor in the most extraordinary scene that was ever exhibited on earth. He was a trophy of victory in a conflict between the powers of Darkness and Light; as the resurrection of many of the dead was an emblem of the great resurrection hereafter.---But what was the character of this man? Was he one whom the spirit of God had often invited by his word, and whose mind had often been enlightened in vain?—one who had frequently despised the tenders of favour?—one who had continued impenitent, despite of all admonition?—Had he been such, the instance were certainly more encouraging. On the contrary, we have reason to believe that this man was a member of the numerous banditti, who inhabited the rocks and dens of Judea, and who were outlawed from instruction as well as from society. He was one who believed, not in sight of miracles, but in the hour of the Saviour's humiliation, when every thing was opposed to his faith; and when the disciples had deserted their master. I will be bold to say, that more light was communicated

to this companion of the suffering Messiah, than any one of the disciples had then received; for *he* seems to have understood the true nature of the Saviour's kingdom, while they continued ignorant of it some time after his resurrection. Indeed, all the circumstances of the case appear to have rendered it a complete anomaly."

"What, then, do you think of the labourers called in the eleventh hour?"—inquired the gentleman.

"That is not to our purpose. It related to the calling of the Gentiles into the Church of God; and cannot, possibly, have any connexion with our subject. It was a reply to a Jewish murmur. But if it *were* to our purpose, you will recollect that these labourers had not been called before. They are described as wanting opportunity.——To return: A death bed repentance is certainly a departure from the ordinary routine of the Creator's dealing. It is *life* that he demands. It is in life that the Holy Spirit carries on the work of sanctifying grace—a gradual fitting of the soul, while the example extends the kingdom of the Redeemer. The process of sanctifying grace is not usually that of an hour, whatever it may be under a more extraordinary influence. Trials,

sorrows, and changes, in a variety of forms fall to the ordinary lot of the Christian, as part of the means of purifying, humbling, and instructing him. Moreover, if God has demanded our lives, as a service to him, and as a part of the conditions of our salvation,—if we continue to refuse the requirement, will he, who alone giveth repentance, be as likely to grant it when the choice of taking up the yoke and burden of Christ is no longer left us! Thus far the question in relation to *him* is against us. For a moment let us look at it in respect to the sinner himself.—In health every thing is more favourable to serious thought. I know there is a prevalent opinion to the contrary, which it is hard to remove. We are apt to imagine,—as accompaniments of fatal disease,—a tenderness of feeling—a fixedness of thought on eternal things—a subdued temper—freedom from temptation—and a preparation, by the nearness of another world, for the influence of grace. To me it is strange that such fancies are so pertinaciously held. The lethargy from disease—the racking of pain—the cherished hope of recovery, or the eager grasping at it—the impairing of the judgement—the dread of dissolution—these, or a part of them, as well as many other causes, are seriously against us.

And where there is so much else to think of, it cannot be easy to bend all our faculties to a subject which requires their clearest exercise and their constant play, while the natural principles and feelings of the heart are repugnant to it."*

"There is something depressing in that statement"—said Miss O. whose natural vivacity gave way to truths which she could not deny, but which came home with unusual seriousness to her bosom—"Let us return to B——. I have thought it a happy evidence in his favour, when I heard of his willingness, and even desire, to

* Since writing the above, the following quotation from the works of a living writer, has met my eye:—"The amazed spirit is about to dislodge—who shall speak its terror and dismay? When he cries out in the bitterness of his soul, 'What capacity has a diseased man—what time has a dying man—what disposition has a sinful man to acquire good principles, to unlearn false notions, to renounce bad practices, to establish right habits, to begin to love God, to begin to hate sin? How is the stupendous concern of salvation to be worked out by a mind incompetent to the most ordinary concerns?' The infinite importance of what he has to do—the goading conviction that it must be done—the utter inability of doing good—the dreadful combination in his mind of both the necessity and incapacity—the despair of crowding the concerns of an age into a moment—the impossibility of beginning a repentance which should have been completed—of setting about a peace which should have been concluded—of suing for a pardon which should have been obtained; all these complicated concerns, without strength, without time, without hope, with a clouded memory, a disjointed reason, a wounded spirit, undefined terrors, remembered sins, an anticipated punishment, an angry God, an accusing conscience, altogether intolerably augment the sufferings of a body, which stands in little need of the insupportable burden of a distracted mind to aggravate its torments.—*H. Moore.*

die, expressed in much stronger terms than those repeated to us by Mr. ———, this evening."

"If so, I regret that I cannot agree with you even here. As a general rule, I believe it may be said, that men are seldom in the best state of mind when they are *forward* to die. To feel that it is better to depart may be the exercise of a lively hope; but let it be separated from a sense of our duty, and from a predominant wish for whatever is most to our Redeemer's glory, and there is a defect in such a feeling that betrays an unhallowed selfishness. When the prophet sat under the Juniper tree and prayed for death, I do not believe him to have been in the best frame of mind. Good men may display the same folly; but it will be in their bad moments. And conduct at such times is no proper precedent for us."

"But are there not certain evidences which we must admit to be *infallible?*"

"I should not like to attach so strong an epithet to any which have existed only for a short time. But what evidences would seem to approach this character?"

"I do not exactly know. Suppose we begin first, with a *deep sense of guilt?*"

"A sense of guilt, to a greater or less degree, will certainly precede conversion, although its intensity may vary in different persons. But you want some designating quality, as an appendage to this evidence. You are yet to be convinced that this sense of guilt is not of a legal character: that mere dread of punishment which belongs to our desire of self-preservation; or that feeling of horror, which belongs to many a remorseful spirit; and which is at least as likely to disparage the honor of God as to promote it. If you refer to evangelical repentance, you are certainly right. But this is begging the question. We want some proof that the repentance is evangelical; and not a sorrow which may 'work death' in one form, if it do not in another."——"I will go on,"—continued Miss O. "To this I would add sorrow for the sins of others. David mourned for the sins of the people, as well as for his own."

"You are right. The true penitent will look with abhorrence on iniquity. Like the convicted Corinthians, he will feel a holy indignation against sin. And happy is it for him that he does so. But here, too, you are assuming a postulate which is not yet conceded. A confession of sin, and a true sense of it, are, some-

times very different things. The abandoned sinner in the hour of danger may both feel and confess his guilt. And if he have composure enough to think, he may see and confess 'the exceeding sinfulness of sin' every where. Or, what is more to our point, he may believe that he does so. Now, what I have to ask for here, is the unequivocal mark of sincerity."

"I will strengthen the case. My example shall acknowledge the offence of his past life, to be against his *God:* not merely as a matter which, in the very nature of things, must bring its after-woe, but as an evil against the righteous Judge of the Universe: he shall cry, "against thee, and thee only have I sinned, and done this great evil."

"Very good:" rejoined Mr. N——, "all this is the language of the true penitent. But you are to recollect that we are now looking for something more than language, however strong and expressive it may be. Confessions may rank very low in the list of *infallibles.*"

"True, sir. But may not their consistency and character go far? their consistency with themselves, and the tone of their character, conformed to that of admitted examples? Now let me give a few more strokes to my picture; and then look at it as a whole: There shall

be an acknowledgement of the justice of God, in his sentence against the guilty. Good resolutions shall follow; and these shall be made before God."

"Excellent!—You certainly do well in comparing the different dispositions of mind with one another, as we sometimes compare one Christian grace with another, in order to ascertain its worth: or, as we look for other graces, where we see the appearance of one. But you know that where one grace is spurious, all the rest will be so likewise; for although all our graces may not be in equal exercise, none will be wanting. Now, if a single fictitious quality of religion present an attractive appearance, much more will a combination do so. And your picture, as a whole, beautiful as it might be to the human eye, may be very unacceptable in the sight of God.——I am afraid you will think me hypercritical. And I know that there does appear something unamiable in a severe analysis of principles which our humanity would pass as "stamp-proof," without examination. But as I have already expressed my own strong hopes in favour of B——, to whom, if you please, we will suppose my remarks to have no application,—you will bear with me if I extend these remarks still further on the general question."

"There is"---continued Mr. N——, "there is a portrait drawn by an inspired hand, which has all the touches of your own picture---all the evidences which you have given to the penitent---and yet neither of us would like to be the original."

"Indeed! in the Scriptures?"

"Yes; even there. In the book of Exodus, you will find an account of one who made a publick confession of his guilt---was sensible of his danger---acknowledged the righteousness of God—his own guilt against him, and that of his people likewise—besought the prayers of holy men in his behalf—and made the most earnest resolutions. Now had matters stood thus for some days, without any change in the heart of this individual,—and had he then died a natural death, it is very doubtful whether we should not have ranked him among the trophies of grace. But the word of God has left no room for doubt. As it has given us no fair example of a death bed repentance, and that, perhaps, to prevent an undue reliance on such hopes—while it enlarges much on the goodness and forbearance of its divine author—so it has prevented us many examples of vain expectations, and hypocritical graces. In the present one, you have the prayer answered. And is it not

true, that many a sinner awakened under affliction, and apparently humbled like this man, conceives the answer of his prayer for the removal of affliction to be an evidence of his acceptance and favour with God? In this case, the confessions were not from the heart—the resolutions were a consequent of mere personal danger—there was no true humiliation before God—and there was a desire to treat with the Almighty on terms which he never prescribed—a secret desire of which the sinner may be unconscious. When the rod was withdrawn, every relenting feeling went with it. And the late sensibilities—like all other unsanctified sensibility in the day of evil or alarm—left the heart more hardened, and more ripe for its doom."

Miss O., during a discussion of which I have given but a part, saw her "*infallibles*" stealing away, one after another, before either of them had sustained as rigid a scrutiny as it might have received. She felt compelled to yield her assent to truths which were adapted to sober the pleasures of a sanguine and enthusiastic fancy.

"I admit,"—said she—"that repentance is a habit, and not an act. It must accompany us through life."

"You are right," said Mr. N——, "it is this very position which renders our dependence on death-bed hopes, at best uncertain. There is no time to try them. They pass through no ordeal. The criterion which the Redeemer gave us, "by their fruits ye shall know them," is out of our reach. Sensible of all this, then, while I would not diminish the consolation of the friends of a death-bed penitent, by any surmises of a possible deception—while I would pay such deference to their feelings as not to infringe them—I would not dare to raise the voice of unqualified eulogy in behalf of the departed; lest I inspire hopes in the bosom of procrastinators, in their own behalf, from a source of whose worth I am very far from being certain. The benevolence and compassions of God I can most gratefully proclaim. But their application in any extraordinary case, without strong proof, I should deem it unsafe to assume, as a lesson to others. There is enough to comfort, to warn, or to encourage us without uncertainties. But above all, I must lift up my protestations against these "Dying Confessions;" which are, often, not so much a record of crime as demonstrations of the facility with which a hardened, and perhaps blood-stained convict passes from villainy to saintship."

"There was no disposition in any one present to dispute the ground on which Mr. N—— was standing; or to extend the limits of expectation, in behalf of the dying, beyond a hope proportioned to the possible evidence in its favour. We all felt that to *die* the *death* of the righteous, there was no positive assurance given except that derived from *living* his *life*.

The conversation now took a different turn; and after an agreeable and improving hour, and a prayer led by one of the ministers, in which B—— was not forgotten, the party separated.

There was a charm in the converse of this pious party of which it is not always our lot to partake. If it be true that religion is dishonoured where its professors have met to enjoy the gossip of the day, and where each of them is pandering for the ready ear of another, the contemptible tattle of the neighbourhood, and where each acquires a taste, if not a skill in the dissection of character.——If it be true that piety sinks in the estimation of the world, where its professors have not been instructed in the principles of charity for each other; and where a mutual confidence rises or sinks as selfishness is flattered or threatened—it is equally true that there are few engagements more promotive of faith in God, more improv-

ing to ourselves, or more happy in their effects on the heart and life, than an intercourse with those whose single aim is to ripen for heaven. The exchange of sentiment, which gathers the riches of experience as it passes from one to another—the collision of argument where truth and not victory is the end proposed—and even the lively repartee which comes home to its mark, but never wounds—and then those happy communications that make glad the child of Zion, and fill his heart with praise—and that interchange of views, in which co-workers with Christ are consulting the advancement of his glory—how they bless the hours, while they wing them away to bear up their report to heaven! Such seasons as these are among the brightest spots in our pilgrimage. And when we have trodden far beyond them, we can sometimes pause, and look back, and see the light around them, faint in the distance, but unextinguished still!

There was another reason why I could not have forgotten the conversation of this evening. Two months afterwards, B—— left the house of the friendly Superintendant, with the ostensible view of accepting an offer from a relative in a distant state in the Union. His patron,—it was said,—expressed no regret at the part-

ing; although he was equally silent in regard to any thing unfavourable to his late charge. At the expiration of three years, an advertisement was observed in several of the daily prints, copied from a similar publication, in the State of T———, offering a reward for a culprit, the description of whom corresponded with that of B——. It was now ascertained that the latter had not left the dwelling of his Patron until after an act of ingratitude and crime, which pity for his condition had, hitherto kept secret in the family,

The sequel of the story is short.—B—— was indeed the advertised criminal. He had assumed a name that gave him an "*alias*"—the usual appendage of public roguery. He was arrested. He died without any other apparent compunction than that of regret, expressed with an oath, that "he had not been permitted to pay the penalty of the law three years before, when he might have left the world in better circumstances."

And now, if I could present a common antithesis of fact, in the end of his former companion in guilt—If I could write *peace*, where despair was once so legible, I might increase the interest of the melancholy story, by a denouement which is commonly expected, and

which is not without its interest to a reader: but of this second culprit I have heard no more.——

THE COUNTRY PASTOR'S FUNERAL.

"Clay to clay, and dust to dust!
"Let them mingle—for they must!
"Give to earth the earthly clod,
"For the spirit's fled to God.

"Dust to dust, and clay to clay!
"Ashes now with ashes lay!
"Earthly mould to earth be given,
"For the spirit's fled to Heaven.

"Deep the pit, and cold the bed
"Where the spoils of death are laid;
"Stiff the curtains, chill the gloom
"Of man's melancholy tomb.

"Look aloft! the spirit's risen—
"Death cannot the soul imprison:
"'Tis in Heaven that spirits dwell,
"Glorious, though invisible."

It was a memorable day to the inhabitants of the little valley of P——. From the house of the thrifty farmer down to the cottage of the day-labourer, every tenement had given up its inhabitants. Here, fathers might have been seen leading their children slowly up the knoll on which the Parsonage stands, followed by the mother with her infant offspring. Under those Elms, which, a fortnight since, threw a deep shade over the humble mansion, but which were now reliquishing their foliage, you

might have beheld groups of older and younger men, listening to those who claimed the privilege of speaking, or whose opportunities enabled them to tell something of the last hours of the departed. There, you might have heard an aged Christian, describing the solemnity of an installation some thirty years gone by; while the youth around him hung upon his lips, and recurred, at the close of the tale, to the melancholy occasion on which they had now assembled. And there, you might have learned the beginning and progress of a disease that sundered the pastoral connexion, and recalled the ambassador of God to his final account.

A few yards from this spot, you might have passed through the throng which skirted the dwelling, and entered the house of mourning. There was no sable habiliment to announce the work of death—save a few black hoods that denoted a distant relationship in the wearers—but nature had clothed every countenance in a garb of unfeigned sorrow.

The two rooms, which, with a narrow entry composed the ground floor, were occupied by females, indiscriminately seated. In the centre of one of these, a plain walnut coffin rested on a low bier. It was unroofed: and the uncovered face of its tenant was visible. It was

placid and serene; and exhibited more of the aspect of an unconscious invalid, than of one from whom the living spirit had fled. There was nothing ghastly in it, nothing appalling, nothing repulsive. You would have said of the inanimate frame, as the Apostle said of former companions of the Redeemer, that it had "fallen asleep."

There was one eye fixed on the spectacle.—It was that of a minister of the Gospel, whose field of labour, some four miles distant, was one of the adjoining parishes. He had been the confidential friend of the deceased during one half the term of his ministry. They were of kindred feeling and congenial tempers. The sincerity of the friendship of either had never been tried by jealousy or suspicion. The survivor was past the climacteric of sixty. The departed had not quite reached it. But the heads of both were blanched: and the furrows which care had made were equally deep.—This spectator did not weep. His gaze was serious, and half-vacant: and it had continued so for an hour. It was plain that the workings of the soul were elsewhere; and you could have surmised, from that look, the very locality of thought. Fancy had blended the absent and present spirit together. And the survivor seem-

ed but half earthly, while his mind wandered on to the new abode of his friend.

——There is something sacred in sorrow, even to him who cannot enter into all its sympathies; unless sensuality has brutalized the faculties, or ferocious habits have curdled the milk of human kindness. But where that sorrow is mingled with piety, and broods, for a season, over its object, with all the softened feelings of Heavenly hope, it is difficult to restrain our respect. It was so here. Each in this assembly of mourners—while she forgot not her personal loss—as she glanced at this abstracted man of God, seemed unwilling to break in on his grief, while she made efforts to repress the utterings of her own.

The long preparatory interval, between the collecting of the attendants, and the movement towards the "narrow house," which usually occurs in the obsequies of the dead, and which seemed to have been protracted here by a reluctance to give up the cold remains, was now drawing to a close. The low hum of approaching voices was not to be mistaken. It was the nearing of the ministers of death. There was no conductor of ceremonies. None of that *form* of proceeding so general in the interment

of the great, and so long established by custom in populous cities.

Three parishioners, of whom one was the Senior Elder of the Church entered the door of the apartment in silence. Another followed, supporting the feeble widow, who had just descended from her chamber, attended by two daughters, whose unveiled faces betokened the effects of sleeplessness and weeping. They advanced in turn, and imprinted a kiss on the chilled lips of the dead, followed by a gush of feeling that forced the flood-gates which would have restricted it within its bounds. Many who were present imitated an example which nature dictated, and which, I am sure, nature would have defended.

Oh, there is a power in love, whose energy overcomes all other feeling! The lips of the living and dead were united—and no shrinking was there. The same principle which supported the affectionate female disciples of Jesus to the place of his sepulchre, and banished the superstitions of the spot and the hour, attached a dearness to the cold frame of the departed husband, father and pastor, and imparted a warmth to the lips so unconsciously pressed. It is love, too, which bears up the bereaved, in the midnight visit to the chambers of the dead;

without the intrusion of idle fancy, or the fears of a disturbed imagination. Oh yes; and it is the same principle which familiarizes the approach of dissolution to the dying Christian, lights the dark passage before him, and utters its greeting to the stern realities of an untried moment.

In the midst of sobs more audible, the scene became one of more activity. Numbers of the crowd, who had stood by the door, as if waiting the last opportunity of beholding a countenance beloved in life, entered the room in single file—passed round the coffin,—stood for a moment at its head—and successively gave room to others. Here and there, the line was broken by one or another, who paused still longer to take hold of one of the hands that crossed each other on the breast of death. It was a hand with which they were familiar: and its affectionate grasp had often seconded a sincere inquiry into their welfare.—The ingress became gradually more infrequent, until it ceased altogether.

The senior Elder advanced with his two assistants to the bier. Another pause succeeded: a low whisper might have been faintly heard—and the gaze of the three was directed to the venerable minister whose office it was to per-

form the last duties, which society pays to its its members, for the late friend of his bosom. He stirred not. His visage continued unaltered. His eye was yet unfilled. A hundred had successively stood between him and the apparent object of his look—still it remained unaltered—not a muscle had moved.

The work proceeded. The lid of the coffin was slowly put on its place. The two parishioners fitted the fastenings. I am not confident—but I thought I saw the head of one of them averted in the act.——The grating of the screw succeeded. There was something startling anew in the sound. Heavy sighs could be heard. And, in one instance, a loud groan came full on the ear.—I could not wonder at this: I could have echoed it back. A frosty shuddering crept over me. I reflected on the imprisonment of the body—and it was all we had of one beloved—the care taken to confine it—the last look at the deceased—and there is something in that term LAST, which forces on us a sense of utter bereavement and loneliness—A momentary colour slightly tinged the cheek of the surviving friend, and gave place again to its former paleness. He arose: stood for a moment as if to recall the powers of a mind whose forces had been scattered, or to summon

resolution for the duties before him. He walked to the porch—looked around on the awaiting congregation, and sat heavily on the seat that was near him. I know not what passed within his breast, but I know there was a conflict there. This was the summer-evening's seat of the deceased. And it had been a thousand times the spot where they had taken sweet counsel together. It was rich in the imagery of the past to a memory active in re-calling the by-gone scenes. But it possibly reminded of a present desolation. And so might all that was around it. The half denuded rose-tree, which the season was unclothing—the red-berried vine secured to the wall of the parsonage, and the Indian-creeper that crossed its way, and encroached on its territory—all reminded of the hands that had reared them, and which were soon to moulder and mingle in dust.

There are *moments* which condense the dealings and doings of *years:* and bring the words and thoughts which accompanied them within a narrow compass. But they are moments which have "a local habitation:" when things around us prompt the memory, and speak their several parts. It is a combination which retrieves from oblivion much that is painful, and much that is lovely. Such was the scene

and time I am describing now. Yet much as they told, their duration was short. A shuffling sound, followed by the laden bier, supported on the shoulders of four young men, again recalled to himself the abstracted occupant of the porch.

The line of movement was taken up. The ranks were filled in order. The sound of the Church-bell struck for the first time on the ear; and it vibrated to the heart of every auditor. That bell had never sounded a regular note before. It had been suspended only two days previously to this visit of death. It was the purchase of a subscription raised by the deceased, and augmented by his personal liberality. It gave its first knel to him.

I know not what there might have seemed portentous in this. But I know that in such hours the heart is credulous in omens. We suspect leadings to the future in things that are present. The judgement acts with feebleness. Fancy reigns sole directress.

Oh how admirably adapted to meet all the exigencies which a natural superstition creates, are the principles of the Redeemer's Gospel! And how plainly do we see this in proportion to the simplicity in which they are preserved, and the purity in which they are taught!

And how distinctly the converse of this has been seen, when the ambition and the folly of men have mixed their own devices with the principles of God. It is undeniably true that the spirit of man needs some other stay than that of mere human teaching. It has its weaknesses even where the intellect is most vigorous. And easy as it may, generally, be to conceal them, there are times when they are too distinct to be unnoted by ourselves. What wonder, then that the favourite seat of superstition is the bosom of the Infidel?——

The procession advanced, almost silently,—save when a half stifled sob, or the quarter minute strokes of the bell, varied its stillness.—What a season for reflection!

Who can recount the consequences which flow from the death of a faithful ambassador of God? The demise of a moarch changes the hands of government, and gives a new cast to the temporal destiny of its subjects. But in all this, hardly a perceptible effect may take place in the fate of their souls. From the decease of a spiritual teacher, effects shall flow far and wide through eternity.—His, is a long account: for his, was a task of no less than infinite moment.

It required a resolution of sacred imparting. It called for the breathings of a Heavenly Spirit. It needed a holy jealousy for the rights of Jehovah. It demanded a patience, and yet a zeal and a meekness, which belong to no natural mould of man. It enjoined an activity in the midst of the infection of spiritual death. It imposed a responsibility from which an unaided angel might shrink, and leave the duty undone. And yet the weakest of mortals, nerved by power divine, might take up the burden. It was to such feeble hands, that the great Head of the Church committed this stupendous work from the beginning: And it is still by instruments of flesh and blood he moves on the mighty wheels of his moral government.

The cares, the hopes, and the pleasures of a faithful ministration are of a class peculiar to themselves. No untried man may fairly conceive them. But when his work is done, and the officer goes up to return his commission to Him who gave it, there are arrears at whose unfolding, humanity might revolt. And there shall they stand, until the final day when they confront all whom they concerned.

This was no field of fancy for the speculations of a busy mind. While I felt assured of

the peace of the departed—while I could not doubt of his rest and his joy—I was sensible, too, that many there were wending their way to the "the long home" of his body, towards whom he stood now in a new and awful character. For them, his earnest tones of importunity, and the voice of his prayer were to be heard no more. For them, in whose behalf he had pleaded to their own souls, and to their God, he had exchanged the title of minister of reconciliation, for that of *witness* before the throne of Jehovah. Whatever the issue of a succeeding ministry, privileges of a certain description had passed away. The herald of many years was gone. And the message he had delivered was "the savour of life unto life, or of death unto death."—Could they have realized for a single instant, all that this reflection told—could they have seen the new epoch now marked in their lives, how would fearfulness have covered the history of the past, and extended into the uncertainty of the future!—But no: we bless the chamber where the good man dies: we pay the deference of funeral rites: we honor virtues of which we scarcely thought in the living example: and perhaps we cover weaknesses which belong to mortality in its best estate, and which often mar to the sight the fairest work of grace.—

But hundreds take up the threadings of a funeral procession—in such a case as this—who remember the man, and forget the ambassador. Hundreds, who find no instruction in one of the most pointed admonitions which Heaven ever sends to the guilty; and who see no personal application in a warning unequivocal and full.

I have sometimes thought that if ever the malignant hope of spirits accursed, exulted in one earthly scene above all others, it were in the failure of the admonition here. And I have thought, too, that if the adversary of souls were to express his highest wish for the doom of a victim, it would be, not that the rays of the Gospel might shine feebly on him; nor that his privileges might be imperfect and few; nor that an unmoved conscience should retain its stillness in the heart: it would be the malicious prayer—"shed the light of thy mercy around that soul—let the power of thy law reach to his bosom—give activity to his conscience—multiply his advantages, and vary his opportunities—*then* let habit render indifferent that light—let perverseness nullify the law—lull conscience to rest again—and let every blood-bought advantage bring the listlessness of a dull

monotony—this were the highest triumph of Hell over an abandoned soul!"

I knew that there were those bringing up the rear of our ranks, who had felt the convictions of holy truth: whose successful effort it had been to erase impressions again and again: who remembered a solemn season to the souls, with the secret shame which a recollected hour of weakness brings—or with a stupid insensibility—or with an utter recklessness of all that had once scattered the hopes of a fictitious peace. And I thought, how powerless may become the most solemn appeals to the heart: how the very remembrance of an affecting interview with the departed pastor, in the day of thoughtfulness, may be perverted into a spiritual stupefaction!——

The procession was now winding into the gateway of the Church-yard. The last stroke of the bell was dying away: and, excepting the obtrusion of sorrow, or the light tread over a gravelled walk, which passed through a beautiful avenue of Locusts, there was a saddening quiet befitting the act and the time. On the left of the Church, a weeping willow waved over the little mound of earth to which our steps were directed. On one side of this stood a rude stone, with the inscription:

A Tribute
To the Memory of
Louisa R****
Who departed this life
May 18, 18—
Aged 17 years.
We meet among the family of Christ.

It was the uncouth chiselling of a father's hand. And the planting of that willow was his: and the ashes of parent and child were now to blend together.——

The bearers deposited the bier. The Sexton, a hard-featured, middle aged man—placed two ropes at the head and foot of the coffin; and it was let softly down to the bed prepared for its reception. The rumbling sound of the withdrawing ropes was like an electric shock to the multitude around us. But it imparted very little change to the countenance of the officiating minister.

I could be melted by the gush of sorrow that bathes the face of a sufferer. I could feel that his woes have come home to my own bosom and are the mutual property of us both. Or, where no such deep feeling has formed a partnership in woe, there must be different materials from those of my own constitution to resist an appeal to a momentary emotion. But there was something far past this in the officiating minister. He stood on the pile of earth

which was to cover the entombed body, and a portion of which had already descended under the pressure, and rattled on the tenement of the dead. For twenty yards before him the ground was gently sloping; and it gave him a fair command of every eye that was not cast down or covered. As he looked beyond him, I would have given much for a sketch of his features. They spoke not an effort to obtain the mastery of his feelings. There was no struggle between the passions and the judgement. There was no yielding to the strong grasp of sorrow. I have noted both of these: and I could take part in the conflict of the former, or participate in the calmness of the latter. But there was an expression of something here less definable than either. It was a mysterious expression. It might have reached the heart of him who saw it and penetrated its inmost chambers. It would have settled down the most mercurial spirits that ever belonged to a volatile mind; and held forth something of *principle* to that of the most undisciplined. It was the outworkings of a vigorous faith; that had rendered the events and scenes around it the steppings of a ladder on which it arose to the Heavens: a faith well-practised and skilful in the disposition of materials for its exercise.

A faith that wrought with nothing imaginary; but was never at a loss for truths to nourish and support it. Its possessor was gifted with little of the lore of research. He *believed*. And he possessed the enviable art of interpreting all that he saw, by the rules of that hallowed belief, and then of applying the result to its confirmation. What an admirable example to the Christian! How opposite was all this to that notion of faith which views it as the mere assuager of a present sorrow, until time shall hurry us on from the sight of that sorrow—or merely as the prop of the departing soul in its last exigency of sundering.

True faith is a principle. And its strength or weakness will depend on its habitual action, or its periodical inertness. Give it to one whose study is not of books, but men; one who applies the truths from which it sprang to all that he sees—and whose every pursuit is inseperable from some of its influence—and there exists not a cause of action so equitable and so powerful in the human bosom. And still is there nothing in it to neutralize the best affections of our nature—nothing to indurate sensibilities which are necessary to the happiness or well-being of society. If contemplation ever abstract the mind in its seasons, an habitual

activity in the scenes of the world, will leave a readiness to regard every claim that world may present.

This is not speculation. It is truth. We know too little,—even the most favoured among us,—of the regular effects of this heavenly gift. We understand how universally it might act; but restricting it too much to times and seasons, we find its influence irregular, and its power fitful and capricious. We attribute to outward circumstances all their deleterious consequences on our faith, when we should have learned to apply them to its benefit. We make too little use of the minor events of life, when they might have been powerful adjutors in promoting this grace. And we too easily forget that of all the virtues of the Christian, there is not one that requires a more habitual exercise, or sinks lower under neglect: Not one more fitted to the state in which we live, or so purifying for that to which we are looking. When the Christian reaches the destination which awaits him, or approaches its confines with collectedness of thought, will he not be astonished that he so little improved a talent which mercy committed to his trust—that he thought so little of its riches—and saw so small an extent of its application? And will he not

discover that much of his complaint of obscurity of views originated in remissness of his own.

The man of Faith, who stood on the mound before me, was very far from being unmoved by the scene in which he was about to take so active a part. Like him who wept over the sufferings of humanity by the tomb of Lazarus, he had a tear more ready for the griefs of others than for his own. If he had acquired an habitual firmness, there were hours in which it relaxed. And who does not know that it is comparatively easy to restrict emotion within its secret place, while the tongue is permitted to be silent, and no muscular action is demanded? And who has ever officiated at the grave of a friend that did not feel his firmness unsettling in the first effort to speak!——It was now I saw the lips before me curled and quivering.—The eye filled——A deep moving agitation shook the frame in which it heaved. But it was all momentary as the pause it occasioned. A slight flush covered his cheeks—tears flowed down them in hurried succession; and, as if the opening of their fountains had given immediate relief, a strong and melodious voice broke the stillness of the assembly: and called and rivetted the attention of every auditor to the exalt-

ed subject on which it was exerted. The speaker commenced with a passage which thousands of times has dissipated the doubts of a dying hour, and flung a cheering brightness through the sepulchre of the dead,--and shall do so thousands more——"I am the resurrection and the life!"

It is the suitableness of Scripture to our circumstances which gives it its efficacy, and its value. And there is not in all the record of Holy Writ, language which breathes with more sweetness than this, or tells with more energy, to the heart of the Christian mourner: "I am the resurrection—the resurrection and the life!" Behold a short-termed loan to the grave: And the king of terrors shall restore it again--restore it with interest: It is a loan of mortality—returned immortal: Given in putrefaction—repaid in spiritual glory!

I would make no effort to record the substance of the address which followed. It possessed but little nerve of diction; neither a trope nor an ornament: and yet it was eloquent: But it was the eloquence of nature, derived from the occasion, which gave it birth; and promoted by the richness of the field on which it played. I could have pencilled the scenery around me: I could now have painted the il-

luminated countenance of the speaker. But these were *matter*. No skill could have traced the movements of *mind*—felt as they were. Neither pen nor pencil could have imbodied for the eye, the beauty, majesty and harmony of the whole: For it *was* a whole; complete in all its simplicity. It poured forth without the semblance of exertion—a clear, smooth, unbroken current. Or, if a partial falter once or twice interrupted its course, it was only to give the variety of the dashing torrent that followed, and that whelmed and swept, all before it: For it *did* sweep all before it. Whatever the fruit of this occasion, which the Judgement day may reveal, not an auditor was now unmoved. There was no flattery to the virtues or memory of the departed. After a revelation of the hopes of "the dead that die in the Lord," and an expression of confidence in the happiness of the deceased, or of consolation to surviving friends, the office of the departed was brought to act on the circumstances and experience of all. Here was room for a touching pathos—the winning persuasive—or the grave, and sometimes terrific, warning.

"To all of you he tendered the instruction of a spiritual counsellor."——And here were *babes in Christ*, whom he had carried in his arms:—

He had often hushed their fears—advised in temptation—obviated difficulties—and poured the light of knowledge where ignorance had clouded their prospects. And there were *fathers* and *mothers* in *Israel*—into whose houses he had carried the cup of consolation, and from whom he had removed the chalice of bitterness. There is something in the fervent prayer of the minister of the Gospel, which renders it of peculiar acceptance in the hour of affliction. However inconsiderable the worth which we may have attached to his office, in our hour of prosperity; and however completely we may have forgotten its sacred import—in proportion as the hand of God seems near to us, we attribute a hallowedness to the character. We feel that it is *he* who stands between the porch and the altar. We imagine a sacredness in words that flow from his lips, which belongs not to others. And even the careless and profane, who most reluctantly obey the precept—"in the day of adversity consider," cannot escape the impression of awe, when affliction has made an inroad in the domestic circle, and the ordained officer of the church stands by the breach, addressing the Almighty.

The instructions of a true servant of God often live, like his example, when he that gave

them is no more. There will be scenes and seasons when memory is prompted to recall them. It was so here. The words, "spiritual counsellor" reminded many of dark days gone by: of a burden that once pressed on the spirits, and of the consolatory language that lifted that burden, and gave the spirits activity and buoyancy again. The voice, the words, and the tone, were audible now. But they were so as the sounds of other years. And their recollection inspired a sense of present melancholy, in the thought that they should be heard no more. It was a feeling of desertion. And each of the concerned felt himself *alone*.——

"To many of you he was a spiritual father."——Here was an address to sensibilities more quick than any other in the bosom of the Christian. It created a transition, rapid as that of light, to the different periods of individual history. It brought back the time of impenitence, when the fate of the soul was suspended by the gossamer thread that held together the soul and the body, and that any trifle might have snapped asunder—a time that shades the moment of familiar review in its history of ingratitude and sin. And when such a survey is near,—brought so as it was, in the present instance—who does not realize the

narrowness of escape—the wonderful interference of Almighty power—the display of sovereign, unmerited love!——

Christian! have you not sometimes indulged in that recall of the past, when some incident of life forced the whole back upon you, and it shifted in succession—and exhibited its parts distinct as the unblotted deed of yesterday? And have you not for the moment half doubted the astonishing change, in taste and desires, which grace has effected? And when reflection convinced you of its reality, and gratitude and wonder no longer contended for the mastery within you,—have you not loved to contemplate the steps to the present point of your career! And did you not remember well the occasion that, under high authority, scathed the hopes of self-delusion and folly? And did you not attach a dearness to him who breathed into your ear the language of Heaven—"this is the way, walk ye therein?"——who saw alike your apprehensions and your danger—and who in his eagerness for your good, seemed to make your interest his own?——It was so here, with many a heart that melted down under the mention of "*spiritual father.*" Other sorrows were absorbed in this. The man and the friend were lost in a higher title.

And then the parochial visit, whose recollections were revived in both these titles——I am persuaded that when the best labour of the pulpit is forgotten in the lapse of years, the affectionate intercourse in this will hold its place in the memory. I have known it so when the ministrations of the sanctuary remained a confused and general warning, and when the voice of expostulation here, seemed to continue still. From that singling out, and that personal application, which grapple and fling the sophistries of a worldly mind, there is no easy escape. The heart that may appear unwounded, will, most generally, carry its arrow still; and the day will come when it will rankle there; whether to be healed by the Physician of Gilead, or to inflict its pains in final despair.

The parochial visit, that "fastened in a sure place" the truths of the sacred desk—the conviction of guilt—the dread of woe—the scriptural counsel—the full presentation of a dying Saviour—the dawn of hope—and then the doubts and fears that harass the infancy of spirituality, removed by the same instrument that was chosen to heal as well as to wound—how inseparably were they all associated in a single name.

And such an interest is reciprocal too. It gives a force to exhortation, which is well understood by both adviser and receiver. And the Apostle before us knew how to use it when he said, "though ye have ten thousand instructers in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus *I* have begotten you, through the Gospel. Wherefore I beseech you."—— I am confident that no bond of affection is more lovely than this. And I have sometimes thought that its existence, or its degree may often be an evidence of the fervour of piety, if not of its sincerity. In proportion as we realize our deliverance from death, and enjoy the new life of the soul, it is hard to disconnect our feelings from him, whose faithful care and personal solicitude, were owned and blessed in our behalf. This tenderness may indeed have its dangers,—and what on our stricken earth is without its danger! what may not our yet unsanctified passions corrupt! Into what dear association has not the spirit of idolatry stolen! How often are the very graces of the Christian perverted! How easily will his zeal degenerate into pride! Our corrupted nature unrestrained, would wither all that it touches of Heavenly origin.

There were a few that stood near the grave, whose feelings passed beyond this mark. Others could merge much of their grief in the hope of a future re-union ; but to *these*, the sense of loss was more acute and severe. A few weeks since, they had been gathered in a little harvest that followed a refreshing shower in this garden of the Lord. In their deprivation they felt their weakness. A prop on which they would have leaned, had snapped, and fallen—— Oh there is something of almost unmixed loveliness—or at least the mixture unseen—in the early effusions of a soul that has been taught to lisp the praise of God by lips of tenderness, and has been led on by a mind of gentleness and sympathy—the effusions of such a soul towards his spiritual benefactor. Pious gratitude tempers that love, only half earthly as it is, while it springs warm and pure and fresh from the heart: unadulterated by circumstances, and uncooled by time, it partakes of the very attractions which belong to the "first-love" of the new-born heir of grace! Here was a thrilling chord that sent back the name of "spiritual father," in a strong rush of emotion.

"He shall *warn* you no more," said the speaker, as he shifted his position, and fastened a keen look in another direction. It is not

easy to judge what effect this admonition carried along with it. But there were some whom it reached, that stood, as it were, between two worlds: whose hearts were the theatre of a conflict between life and death: who knew and felt from the convictions within them, that a decision was entering up which no mortal power could alter, and no divine hand was likely to change. It was the settling decision of the soul's last doom.——There is not a condition on earth which involves so much as that of the man who is conscious of the striving of the spirit of God in his bosom. Others may read or see but little that passes within him. Yet a work goes on there, which engages alike the anxieties of Hell and the feelings of Heaven. And all that occurs, and all that is seen or heard around, assists that array, and tends to strengthen one of the embattled forces of good or evil. There is nothing neutral in its effects, during such a juncture. Whatever secures or invites the attention, acts its part in the affray; and looks to the rejoicing of angels, or to the enlargement of Tophet. There is no truth which is invested with greater solemnity than this: And yet perhaps not one which receives, so unfrequently, its just share of regard. He to whom all this belongs is too much engrossed by other cares, to watch the particulars which

go on to decide the stake at issue. Yet if ever there was an hour that might have brought this truth to the sight, it was the one whose last minutes were now passing away.

And there were some, who, as they looked at the opened grave, felt that they could give much for *one warning more*. And there were some over whom there came a painful sense of the nearness of eternity: For even the elements claimed a right to teach in their turn, as a shower of leaves swept through the assembly, and a cold autumnal cloud chilled and dimmed the scenery——"We all do fade as a leaf," was the construction of the hieroglyphic lesson——

A brief, but impressive prayer closed the exercises of the occasion. "The clods of the valley" were drawn to the chasm their removal had left. The crowd slowly dispersed. And in less than half an hour, the place of tombs was silent and solitary.

——There comes a day when new sounds, unlike any with which earth is familiar, shall rend the air of that spot; and the agitated ground shall give back its deposit; and Pastor and People shall meet again. And the secrets of some hearts which were not visible this hour, shall be legible as the pencillings of light.

In the meanwhile, the careless may return to his folly. The pious shall grow in his faith; and yet neither may often think, and neither shall fairly conceive, of the swelled record that has gone up from the scene of a "PASTOR'S FUNERAL."

THE DIVIDED FAMILY.

Then kneeling down to Heaven's eternal king,
The saint, the father, and the husband prays;
Hope springs exulting on triumphant wing,
That thus they all shall meet in future days:
There ever bask in uncreated rays,
No more to sigh or shed the bitter tear;
Together hymning their Creator's praise,
In such society, yet still more dear,
While circling time moves round in an eternal sphere.

Come, peace of mind, delightful guest!
Return, and make thy downy nest
Once more in this sad heart:—
Or shall I see thee start away,
And helpless, hopeless hear thee say,
Farewell! we meet no more?

THERE is not a private scene on earth more delightful than that of the assembling of a pious family around the domestic altar; mingling the incense of grateful emotions in one current that ascends to the throne of God. It is the union of those who are kindred in the flesh, and rendered still more kindred by the blending of spirit. Delightful hour! when hopes go up in company, and enter "within the veil" together. How often have I loved to contemplate the beginning and ending of a day with a family who have a common inheritance

above ; to see those who were to take on them the image of death, and to pass, with death's unconsciousness, the watches of the night, committing their souls to Him who shed light through the tomb ; or those who give an early hour of each new day to Him who shall hereafter bid them rise to the brightness of eternal day. And are not Angels intent on a spectacle which attracts around it the atmosphere of Heaven, and gives a faint shadowing of the exalted family above! There is a taste here that fits its possessors for the purer enjoyment of unmixed spirituality. There is a feeling of dependence on a common parent, which unites his children to him, while it retains them together as members of one body. There is no cement so strong as that of family devotion. There is no flame that consumes so effectually the little jealousies of life, or that purifies so well the feelings which arise from a daily intercourse, as that of the family-altar. Happy hour! too little appreciated by the best of men, and yet presenting some of the brightest spots "in memory's waste." Thousands turn with disgust from its visions of faith, and yet there lives not the infidel on earth who might not quail when he compares the hopes of his bo-

som with that of those who have an interest there.

The family of Morleys had just risen from the posture of prayer. The Bible was carefully returned to its place. The father and mother were retiring to rest. And the two sisters had resumed their seats by the fire. A spectator who could have read the hearts of these young females might have seen a struggle within them that is not of every day's occurrence. It was plain that neither of them was happy. And yet both had participated with emotion in the exercises recently closed. It was manifest, too, that the silence which had been sustained for a quarter of an hour, was painful to at least one of them.

Clara looked wistfully at her sister, as if doubtful whether she might obtrude on her attention, or whether the act might not be repugnant to a heart that seemed full and oppressed. She ventured to speak——"What a wonderful change is this in our family!"

"Yes, it is indeed."

"And how happy it is to feel that sympathy of desires, and to enjoy that union of interest which belong to our offerings of morning and evening sacrifice! Our parents were always affectionate; but they never appeared to me so

dear as they do this moment. And you, too, Maria."—The sister sighed. A tear glistened in the eye of the affectionate girl, as it met the solicitous gaze of Clara, for a moment. She was reluctant to speak; or unwilling to trust herself in what she considered a moment of weakness. And another long interval of stillness succeeded. They parted for the night. Each offered her fervent petitions to the throne of grace; for each had an interest there: and yet each was dispirited and restless. Both had sincerely united at the domestic altar; and yet neither recollected that occasion without a sigh. Nature had never formed ties that promised more durability or strength than those with which she had connected the hearts of Maria and Clara Morley. It was not personal pique; it was not wounded pride, nor the contemptible jealousy of disturbed selfishness that had marred the peace of these two bosoms. Each had always felt that, to susceptible affection,

"A small unkindness is a great offence."

And since they had reached maturity, both were governed, in their conduct towards each other, by laws more effective than the colder suggestions of mere duty.

The family which I am about to present to the notice of the reader, consisted of the per-

sonages whom I have already introduced, and an elder brother who had been absent for a year in Europe, and whose return was now eagerly expected. The village had been blessed with a powerful and extensive revival, in the midst of which Maria had arrived after a visit of six months to the city of B——. She was, however, no stranger to the work which had lately been wrought in her parents and sister. The aunt in whose hospitalities she had recently shared, attended the ministry of a man whose labours had been owned by his Divine Master; and who might certainly have considered his success with Maria Morley, in an early period of her visit, as one of the rewards of his faithfulness.

Miss Nares,—for so I shall call the maiden aunt just mentioned,—was a woman of a good natural mind, of strong feelings, and of a generous temper. Her understanding had received very little cultivation from books; but her memory was retentive; and she had carefully treasured up the public and private instructions of her Pastor. Of the latter she received a larger share than any other member of the congregation. Her rank in life, her property, and her freedom from domestic cares, rendered her an invaluable acquisition to one who was

indefatigably engaged in behalf of his flock. A week, therefore, seldom passed without a visit of some hours from Mr. Wythe. And during such times she was the depository of parochial secrets, the co-adjutor in counsel, and the willing assistant in schemes of benevolence.

How far she was flattered by such complimentary partialities, as women under such circumstances are said to be, I have never learnt. Although I am aware that it was shrewdly suspected by many that the influence of these attentions was not lost on the mind of their object. But then the world judges harshly. And it is not unapt to impute dispositions and tempers, which arise from unsanctified disappointments, to that class of people who, for some two centuries past, have received the sarcastic appellation of "religious old Maids:"——and Miss Nares had passed over the dreaded line of single thirty.——Congregational difficulties, and parish slanders, are commonly set down in the gross, to the credit of those who are said to possess a prescriptive right to a certain kind of activity in the Church. And I have heard even a worthy minister say, that he "never knew the array of two parties in a divided congregation, in which the principle agents were not of this class."

There is always something either rash or illiberal in sweeping imputations. In the present instance I am sure of the latter. And those who attempt to account for the supposed truth of so broad a position by examining the effects of a solitary life, defeated hopes, or of a petty ambition in a field to which the whole energies are transferred, are guilty of an act of injustice in assuming a disputed position. Miss Nares was so far free from weaknesses sometimes attributed to her, that she really felt no desire to be more conspicuous than the nature of her chosen pursuits rendered indispensably necessary. She never spoke of herself: and appeared to consider her whole agency in acts of benevolence as simply instrumental in the hands of a higher power. If assiduous attentions had ever flattered her vanity—as they have done in so many instances before her—she certainly was not sensible of it; and they did not detract one jot from the ordinary softness of her manners and deportment. Her suavity was rarely disturbed. And her brow had acquired a placidness which neither contradiction, nor personal mortification, was likely to discompose.

There was one feature in the mind of this lady, which deserves particular notice: it was

a susceptibility and retentiveness of impression; two qualities which are seldom united in the same individual, and, perhaps, are never so by nature. Nor would they have been so here, had not principles which were once admitted, been set down as incontrovertible, and all which threatened to produce a contradictory impression, been rejected as untenable. In the early part of her life she had imbibed no decided notions of religion. Except by name, she knew little or nothing of the various creeds, or the different sects of Christianity. And when her heart was touched by divine power, it was under the ministration of the Pastor with whom she was now on so intimate a footing, and who belonged to a denomination different from that of her parents before her, or that of the Morley family. With the utmost conscientiousness she united herself with a people among whom she had received her first serious impressions, on an occasional visit to their Church; and in whose society she had found relief from painful conviction.

All this was natural enough. But Miss Nares did not stop here. To her it was conclusive that a ministry which had been blessed to her was not only the one to which she was providentially directed, but obviously the one

which was nearest to the truth. This idea once settled, all that could oppose it was discarded at sight; and all that could confirm it was sought for with avidity. Her prepossessions had been won, and her judgement was called to establish them, as the principal task assigned to it. Besides, like many others, she had an avowed dislike of unsettledness of mind. It was unhappy. It was an impediment to growth in grace. And the earlier her religious opinions were decided, the greater would be her security from falling. Whether, or how far, she was right in all this, is not the province of a mere chronicle to judge.——But my promised feature is not finished. Another touch will complete it:

There is a kind of fascination in certain words, when they reach certain people, which is perfectly irresistible. In a greater or less degree, this may be observable in every denomination of Christians. It is hardly worth while to exemplify. But he is a careless observer who has not seen with what adroitness the zealous partizan of any creed knows how to wield the *argumentum ad populum*; or who has not marked the powerful effect of a plausible phraseology, in a popular assembly. Put into the mouth of a man of good intellect, who has

a homogeneous audience—if the case may be supposed—such a collocation of phrases as may meet their prejudices and feelings, and he will stand in very little need of assistance from argument to produce confirmation of the justice of his cause

"Strong as proofs from Holy Writ."

The expression which established the creed of Miss Nares was,—"*following the Lord fully.*" It was a talisman before which every doubt of the propriety of her choice always vanished. She saw indubitable evidences that her Saviour had descended into the water, at his baptism. To "follow the Lord fully" was inseparable from strict imitation of this example. Other denominations might be right in most things. But the great defect here was a line of demarkation. She had charity for their failings, mourned sincerely over the pride which kept them back from this grand essential of imitation, and was always astonished at that obliquity of mind, which prevented their discovering the truth. She agreed with her Pastor, that, as this difference of opinion, considering the clear light of the Bible, was rather a fault than a misfortune, to sit at the Lord's table with those who pertinaciously maintained this

difference, was not only in opposition to the divine will, but an encouragement to error.

Under the roof of this lady, the mind of Maria Morley had received a new complexion. Impressed with a sense of religion, soon after her arrival there, much of the instruction which she received, directed her attention to the exclusive rectitude of a particular sectarian faith. Never was scholar more apt: and never the example and precepts of a teacher more successful. Maria had nothing to unlearn: for she had never reflected on the subject; or, at least, had never examined it. She had no difficulties to embarrass her: for all arguments which were introduced into a feigned debate, got up to try the strength of the two sides, were always fairly beaten off the ground; and Maria was left in surprise at the weakness of those who could profess to defend them.—There is nothing easier than to conquer the troops of an enemy at the fireside; or to rout them in a fictitious engagement, when we have chosen their weapons for them. And if, after this, we are ever foiled in a real attack, it is not for want of an acquired confidence in ourselves.

On the expiration of her first four months in the city, Maria had obtained a reluctant permission from her father, to unite herself with

the Church to which her aunt was attached. Some weeks afterwards, a vague report reached her, of a revival in her native village. And that intelligence was confirmed by letters from both her parents and sister, communicating the happy tidings of a spiritual change in the family. The lines from her father, which at the same time recalled her home, gave an affecting account of the manner in which her parents had been led from worldliness to grace. But there was something peculiarly touching in every expression from the pen of Clara. A cool reader might have called it enthusiastic ; but it was an enthusiasm for which good nature would have adjudged no heavy penalty.

Is there not something in the ardour of the youthful convert, which, with all its errors, and its dreams of fancy, wins our admiration whenever it attracts our notice? Is there not a charm in that enthusiasm which glows with the first love of a Saviour? which lights up the countenance by a flame that burns within the heart, and flings a sacred cheerfulness around the path of the young Christian? There is indeed. And though we may smile at what appears to participate in romance—and though we may mourn over our sober predictions of the pains and sorrows which the future will bring,—no

Christian can contemplate the young and ardent infant in Christ, without some feeling of approving pleasure.

There was a passage in Clara's letter which deserves a moment's notice—"We shall now be more united as a family than ever. And for ourselves, my dear sister, we hold our relationship to each other more closely than in years that are past. I long to embrace you. I long to interchange sympathies which are new to us both. I see something lovely in the countenance of every Christian. How much more will it be so in my Maria"——

Maria read the sheet over and over, with a perfect reciprocity of feeling. She, too, longed for the affectionate embrace of meeting. Her bosom glowed with desire. Fancy transferred her to a circle more beloved than ever now. She thought of the hymn in which she had joined at the close of the communion-service:

Our souls by love together knit,
Cemented, mixt in one,
One hope, one heart, one mind, one voice,
'Tis heaven on earth begun.

And when thou makest thy jewels up,
And set'st thy starry crown;
When all thy sparkling gems shall shine,
Proclaim'd by thee thine own;

May we, a little band of love,
Be sinners changed by grace,
From glory unto glory raised
Behold thee, face to face!

But she thought not now of *that* occasion. The words of Christian union echoed in her ears from the paternal fire-side. The sweet voice of her sister thrilled every nerve : a voice to which she had often listened in other lays, but now given, with all its attendant science, to Him whom Angels sing.——Oh, let judgement condemn the disportings of imagination as it may : still, her's is a region peopled with all whom we love, and decked with all that is fair. Where a spiritual taste governs her creative power, and the creatures and scenes of her forming are those with which blessed spirits would deem it no stooping to share, is there an hour nearer to the bliss of Heaven, that that in which a sanctified and elevated fancy reigns ? If the curse has marred a faculty that once shed a pure light through the heart and the mind, and if depravity has prostituted a noble gift of our Maker, to ends that are selfish and sensual, are there not moments, with some, when grace gives to it energies that are as hallowed as they are lofty ? In absence from those whom we love with spiritual affection, may we not borrow the fleet wings of a power that counts not the leagues of separation ? Or when we stand by the tomb of one whom we knew in communications befitting our highest

hopes, who shall forbid that we rise on these wings! And who has not reasoned with himself in such an hour——

"Not to the grave, not to the grave, my soul,
Follow thy friend belov'd——
The spirit is not there!
Often together have we talked of death——
How sweet it were to see
All doubtful things made clear;
How sweet it were with powers
Such as the Cherubim,
To view the depths of Heaven!

O!——thou hast first
Begun the travel of eternity——
I gaze amid the stars
And think that thou art there,
Unfettered as the thought that follows thee——
And we have often said how sweet it were,
With unseen ministry of Angel power
To watch the friends we loved——
——We did not err;

Sure I have felt thy presence; thou hast given
A birth to holy thought;
Hast kept me from the world——
——We did not err;
Our best affections here,
They are not like the toys of infancy——
The soul outgrows them not,
We do not cast them off."

Or was ever spur more effective given to the imagination of one waiting for the revelation of glory, than that of the Apostle's expression——"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that

love him!" Or than some of those unfinished hints, which other inspired penmen have left, touching the grandeur of our future home?

Maria was awakened from her reverie by the entrance of her Aunt. The good lady read the letters of Mr. and Mrs. Morley, with an interest nearly as strong as that of her neice. They were tears of gratitude and joy which were mingled together. One thought, and one only, came up as a cloud before the mind of Miss Nares. But that thought was untold; and that cloud extended no further. Clara's letter was taken up next. A shade thickened on the brow of the reader. And although an expression of pleasure followed, it was qualified almost to coldness. Her young relative saw this. She did not understand it; and its chilling power penetrated the more deeply. She could have wept afresh: but it would have been in mortification. Her ardour was not met; and to her susceptible mind this was as painful as a repulse. Could her Aunt have doubted the sincerity of her sister? or could the enthusiasm which warmed her pages, have come into collision with feelings less sanguine, and more regular? Neither was possible. There was no clue to the mystery.——Perhaps another hour would solve it——And Maria's fancy began to

resume its happy activity again. Another hour did solve it.

The remainder of the day passed, as days commonly pass in families of the pious. If there was nothing particularly instructive in the conversation at meals, there was nothing to encourage a painful thought. And with all that elasticity common to her years, Maria was happy. The single reflection that her own contemplated departure might have occasioned the "morning cloud," which had now passed away, rather increased than diminished her peace. But at night, when the duties of the family were over, Miss Nares, in conformity with her usual custom, continued in the parlour. She drew her chair near to Maria: affectionately took her hand; and with a look indicative of some emotion, addressed her:

"You are now soon to leave me, Maria. I would not repress the truth that you have been more endeared to me every week of your residence with me. And I would not deny that the change which it has pleased God to effect in your heart, has strengthened my attachment. I cannot doubt that a divine superintendance will watch over you. And yet, at the same time, I ought not to conceal my apprehensions that severe trials may stagger your faith.——

Tell me, Maria, was not this the place of your spiritual nativity?"

"Oh how can I forget it?" exclaimed the agitated girl.

"I trust you will not. But the kingdom of of Christ, you know, is divided by those who should be engaged in establishing it. Many for whom I have a sincere hope, are imperfect Christians. They are unwilling to take up the *whole* cross of the Saviour. They break it to render it lighter, or to take away the form of ignominy which belongs to it. If it were not so, the Christian world would not be split into sects. We should all be one. We should be willing to 'follow the Lord fully.' But the most melancholy part of the truth is yet to come. Our Redeemer predicted that his kingdom should be accompanied with a sword: That variance should enter into families; and parent and child, and sister and brother should be sundered from each other."

"True," my dear Aunt,—said Maria, at a loss to conceive what was to follow—"true—but I have understood that passage as relating to the opposition of the natural heart to religion. I know that such things did take place. And I fear they may sometimes do so now. But I am grateful that I shall be exposed to

no trials from that quarter. Ours is now a household of faith. My brother Thurston alone——

"No, my love, you mistake my meaning. I have said that the kingdom of Christ itself is divided. And I have said that most of its members are unwilling to 'follow the Lord fully.' Our greatest trials are when we come into necessary and daily contact with *them*. The Saviour must have referred, in a great degree to this, in his prophecy: especially when he foresaw that those who did follow him, would separate from those who did not. They might admit such to be Christians. But they must believe them to be in a melancholy error. An error which, while it lasts, must prevent as close a union as is desirable between the children of God. The Apostle has directed us to seek first purity, and *then* peace. You now return to your father's house. But unhappily there is reason to believe that none of his family will 'follow the Lord fully.'—The minister of the Village, although an excellent man, has not himself completely imitated the Saviour's humble example. It is here we have reason to mourn. You can neither approach the Lord's table with them there, nor they with you here."

A truth flashed luridly over the mind of Maria, at the conclusion of this sentence. It covered the dear objects on which her thoughts had dwelt that day. It gave a sickly hue to the bright scenes in which her imagination had played. It altered for a moment, the whole aspect of the future. She felt a sinking sensation, as if the place that she occupied were giving way beneath her.

She had, hitherto, admitted with readiness that they who were unwilling to tread in the steps of the Redeemer, in the distinguishing particular of her adopted creed, ought not to be admitted to a seat by the memorials of dying love, with those who are thus faithful throughout. But there are principles which appear very different when we examine their agencies in our own concerns, from the form they assumed, when we considered them in relation to others. And there are principles which we cannot examine with impartiality, until we have seen their effects in both these relations. Maria now understood this. It had not occurred to her that the implied engagement into which she had entered, was to effect an important change in her temporal destiny. She had seen nothing very forbidding in forming a line of demarkation which she was not to pass. It

was of little or no import, that others who were in her circle of life, were not to join her in the highest emblem of Christian love. The fault was *theirs;* and all she could do was to lament it. But when she saw the reaction of her principles upon herself, and their application to her dearest connections, the face of matters was altered—dismally altered. She felt as if an impassable gulf were now between her relations and herself. She could not go to them; they could not come to her. The hope of a future re-union where all the family of Christ shall sit down at "the Marriage Supper of the Lamb," was cold and cheerless to one whose affections called for an intercommunion now; and that hope was dim in its distance to the sight of one who was thinking only of the present.

Miss Nares was not entirely ignorant of what was passing in the mind of her neice. Nor was she without some apprehensions that a frame which had long been feeble, and which was threatened with a fatal debility, might suffer severely from the shock which awaited it. And there were times when she was half disposed to relent in her purpose; and to permit Maria to return to her parents without injunction or advice on the subject which excited her

own fears. And there were times when she almost wished that the restrictive system, by which her creed was distinguished, did not belong to it. Yet an imperious sense of duty conquered these scruples of her heart: and her convictions became stronger than ever, that our obligations were not to be weakened by any of the evils to which they might expose us: but that, on the contrary, these evils were designed to be a test of our obedience and faith. And then she, too, was to make a part of the sacrifice; for, to her it would be distressing in the highest degree, to see one whom she really loved, enduring a painful conflict of mind. The idea of this participation occurred as a trial to herself; in evidence, not only of her disinterestedness, but of the urgent nature of her duty. With these impressions, then, she was prepared for the struggle which she now saw before her. And her own uneasiness became an argument to enforce a rigid adherence to her purpose.

With an energy, therefore, which was supposed to befit well, the importance of her design, Miss Nares continued her instructions until a late hour. And the parties separated; the one convinced against all the inclinations of her heart; and the other still apprehensive

that her success was less complete than she desired.

The following day was the last of Maria's sojourn in the city of B. It was therefore principally engrossed in preparations for her departure. In these, her Aunt assisted her. And she left no interval unimproved. She lost no opportunity of confirming the admonitions of the past night, or of presenting her arguments in a different form, or of intimating her fears of a possible backsliding from the true faith. In all this she meant nothing unkind: Yet it was harassing to her hearer; who felt that part of it implied a suspicion of her firmness, if not of her integrity. It was unnecessary, too. But Miss Nares understood but little of the texture of Maria's mind. She had never seen her tried. She only knew her as one of an ardent temperament, a good natural understanding, and a most affectionate disposition. Her greatest apprehensions were from the last trait of her character. And she could remember some instances of apostacy from her own sect, arising from the natural infirmity of an inordinate attachment to relatives: instances, too, she regretted to think, in which the delusion was judicially permitted to continue, even

with tranquility in a death-hour ; and the crown of reward in another world, shorn of its lustre.

But, as I have already intimated, she had mistaken her niece. The latter had been too well tutored not to be a proficient in her lessons. Disease, which had given an almost unnatural brilliancy to her swimming eye, seemed to have removed all that was gross from her understanding—all that could impede its most powerful exercise ; and while it sometimes imparted a pensiveness to her manner, rather increased than diminished her decision of character. The spirit of martyrdom never existed more fully than it did in her. She could have bound the fillets of death, with an untrembling hand around her own head ; and she could have led the way, with measured step to the scaffold or the pyre.

A party of two or three female friends, with the Pastor of the Church, assembled at the the house of Miss Nares, in the evening. Maria thought it inopportune, for she was ignorant that it was part of a kind design for her spiritual good. The conversation turned on the subject of her departure. All expressed a serious regret for the necessity of the measure. And not one omitted the suggestion of a hope that she would continue true to her profession.

after the example of Him whom she had thus far followed, and "who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good profession," and continued it unto the end. She was reminded, again and again of the dangers which were about to encompass her. She was advised to make it the burden of her prayer that her views and practice might continue unchanged, and always to remember that though she might feel confident as young Melancthon against the force of the adversary, she might, like young Melancthon, find his wiles too insidious for her simplicity.

In all these well-meant suggestions, Maria observed that there was no counsel relating to spiritual experience, or to the cultivation of Christian graces. But then she distinctly understood that these were implied in the admonitions of "holding fast her profession:" And that "the first step to a progressive decline would be seen in a practical relinquishment of her present belief; for heterodoxy may encroach on our spiritual welfare more insidiously than vice itself."

Another thing, quite as worthy of notice, in this parting interview, had not escaped the observation of Maria: it was the comparative indifference, or rather the comparatively little interest, which the worthy Pastor took in the

conversation. His manner indeed was as kind as ever, but he displayed no pains to second the kind admonitions of her friends. And excepting where the frequent interrogative reached him——"don't you think so, Mr. Wythe?" he was apparently little disposed to join in the colloquy. But perhaps the assiduity which he had used to confirm her principles, on her first admission to the Church, and for some weeks afterwards, was considered sufficient. Or, possibly, he did not think an auxiliary necessary where there was already a "multitude of counsel." Or, it might be that he saw a depression of spirit through the mild countenance before him, and his generosity forbade his increasing it. So thought Maria; and in either conclusion she was disposed to be grateful. For once, however, she was wrong.

Mr. Wythe was the spiritual shepherd of a numerous flock, to whom his attentions were unremitting. No man ever taught more faithfully the tenets of his own belief, or more firmly established the people of his charge in the doctrines he inculcated. Scarcely a Sabbath passed in which he did not either illustrate his distinguishing principles, or plainly, or indirectly congratulate his congregation on the primitive purity of their views. Whether he consi-

dered the principle of close communion of *vital* importance he did not say. But certain it is, that often as he found it necessary to shew the expediency, and even the necessity, of such a separation from other denominations, he rarely canvassed objections to it, and when he did so, he trod the ground with exemplary caution: and never wasted the patience of his auditory by detaining them long in traversing it. Such would have been the observation of an attendant on Mr. Wythe's ministrations. But such was only the exterior of the truth.

Living in a city in which many churches were flourishing around him; and where a spirit of rivalship, not to say of jealousy, had crept into the emblematic body of Christ, this excellent man was not insensible to its influence. The necessity of self-defence, against the encroachment of opposite views, the loss of some of his own converts in certain instances, and, not least of all, the habit of reflecting on these things, reminded of them, as he so frequently was, by those who watch for the news of the day—tended together to impart some degree of illiberality of feeling to a mind on which nature never intended the stamp of bigotry. He had been highly pleased in the acquisition of Maria Morley to the number of his flock. And

he had spared no pains to inspire her with confidence in his doctrines. Had he been in danger of losing this accession by a wavering of faith through the efforts of another denomination in the city, no man would have been more indefatigable in his exertions to prevent such a loss. He would have foreseen in it,—as ministers generally foresee—not the mere loss of a unit, but a blow at both credit and respectability. A single such defection is commonly regarded as the incipient stage of a disease, which, although local now, threatens the health of the whole body. But Maria was about to leave the city. No serious consequences could result to his charge if she elsewhere united with another denomination. His interest on the subject was, therefore, not great. Yet all this was a secret in his own bosom. To have given any intimation of it to the present party would have dampened their zeal by destroying the powerful motive on which it subsisted. Such and so frail may be the earthen vessel to which the riches of eternal grace are committed in trust! Such is the spiritual chicanery of many a pious advocate of the Redeemer's cause!

Oh it is vain to protest against the singularity of this example. And it is vain to attri-

bute to congregations not deemed evangelical that *esprit de corps* which is often the legitimate effect of illiberality. It is an infirmity, if we may so call it, which not unfrequently distinguishes the pious pastor and the pious flock, in every denomination of Christians. It is lamentable but not the less true, that we see more pains taken to swell the list of a communion table, than to accomplish the more arduous task of cultivating the Christian graces. Pride and vanity, in forms most imposing, may mingle with, and stimulate the very "labour of love." And equally in vain is it to attempt to hide these things from a world that is keen-eyed to professional defects, suspicious of motives, and severe on the detection of disguise. Mortifying truth should be lamented, but never denied. Such was the policy of the sacred penmen. They have described but a single perfect character. The glory of patriarchs and prophets and apostles was tarnished with human evil. But it is a position admirable as it is stable, that Christianity is not dependent on the absolute perfection of its advocates. In the meanwhile, let every minister of the Gospel remember, that the day is coming when the stubble and the wood, the silver and the gold shall be tried in the furnace. Happy they who

can unite with a simplicity of purpose, and a singleness of heart, an unaffected zeal for the kingdom of the Redeemer! Happy—where selfish purpose and private ambition stain not the glory of the cross!

Under the protection of a friend of her father, Maria was early the next morning on her return to the village of ——. It was a time favourable for thought. Her escort was too much engrossed in the news of the day, detailed by a fellow passenger in the stage coach, or too much occupied in a discussion on the commercial affairs of B——, to interrupt the reflections of his young charge by any other attentions than came naturally in their place. She could, therefore, indulge her propensity to silent thought with all the freedom she desired. And there was enough in the past and future to fill up every hour of her journey. If her mind was not happy, it was tranquil: and in a little time that tranquility gave place to a higher feeling. The gloomy suggestions of the two last days, although at first not entirely removed, gradually receded to the back ground. She had found a new source of hope, and had drawn so largely from it as almost to forget her recent disquietude. This was neither more nor less than the proselytism of her relatives to the

faith she had espoused. It is true, some difficulties presented themselves, and it might be a work of time. But these difficulties vanished, and the time was shortened, when she reflected on the store of arguments which she had treasured against the 'day of temptation.' Besides—her relatives were untrained to such discussion. Her father, although one of the best informed men, had, until recently, been indifferent to experimental religion; and his amiableness of temper had precluded the very mention of what he called invidious distinctions. It was not therefore probable that he was prepared for an assault by the weapons with which she was so well armed. But especially her sister—after all, the best point of attack in the whole citadel. And when she had gained Clara, the eyes of her parents would be opened: parental affection would lend its influence to weaken existing prejudices. The conquest would be complete. And how delightful to see the waning away of unscriptural prepossessions! To watch the progress of light—the dispersion of darkness! To be herself an instrument of gathering into the true fold the lambs which had mistaken the way! She already felt herself the harbinger of the Truth. One question, and one only, arose.

How should she broach the subject? A concerted plan would be best: but she had no assistant in the project. 'Should she startle by a sudden and condensed exposition of the truth? Should she mildly and modestly suggest a doubt on some passage of Scripture, an examination of which might effect her end, with very little trouble on her own part?—Should she open a masked battery on the whole trio, in some unexpected hour? or should she first gradually enlighten the mind of her sister?' The last scheme was most feasible. It would enable her to examine her ground with precision. It would give her time to look out, if it ever became necessary to stand on the defensive: a necessity exceedingly improbable, but for which it was her duty to be provided.——A hundred times she went through the different evolutions which the case would require. A hundred times she displayed the manœuvres of a successful polemick. And a hundred times she heard the concession——"Dear Sister, I believe you are right!"

Happy in these anticipations, her heart was warmed with gratitude to God. She became eager to reach her native village, to meet the hearty welcome which she knew to await her.

We will take no minutes of the journey. We will pass by the greetings of a first interview; for neither is connected with the *morale* of our story.

On the first day after her arrival, Maria found no fair opportunity of putting either of her plans into execution. Clara was occupied in some previous engagement, and the sisters were little together. In the evening matters appeared more auspicious. The subject of conversation which her father had commenced, was one that left an opening exactly such as Maria would have desired; and she filled it with a hint on the importance of conforming, in all things, to the example of the Saviour. But either the hint was not taken, or it was purposely overlooked: for the general reply which succeeded had no direct bearing on the object before her. Another opportunity followed: and although the young advocate was more explicit than before, her success was no greater. She had sagacity enough to discover the apparent disinclination of her friends to her favourite topic; and penetration enough to see that this was not the time for a politic effort: But she had not enough of either to ascertain that there was an art now coping with her own, with the great advantage of watching her

movements, unknown to herself. An art which not only evaded a controversy, but improved on all her suggestions, by giving them an experimental character. Maria was surprized at her father's want of discernment. And it determined her to act with less reserve on another occasion.

No judicious and affectionate head of a family can forsee a division in religious belief among its members, without entertaining serious apprehensions for the result. Mr. Morley had dreaded those little bickerings which he had sometimes witnessed among the professing children of God. And he was not ignorant that where these existed among relatives zealous for their different opinions, the peace if not the whole happiness, of the parties was always at stake. Whatever evil had ever arisen, within his own knowledge, from a diversity of political opinions, he had never known it alarming: but always likely to be removed in any of those revolutions of public sentiment to which a republick is constantly subjected. But in matters of religious opinion it was not so. Here the object of contention is permanent; and it lasts with the lives of the parties. In the former, allowances are made for the warmth of debate; and much that is personally caustic may give but little offence.

Even imputations that are severe, are easily explained by a latitude of meaning, and easily fogotten. Not so in the latter. Here a deference is claimed on the score of charity by both sides; likely to be granted by neither. Each believes that the honour of God is at hazard; and each feels bound to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." Manner, mode of expression, and, above all, a sense of weakness on one side of the argument, and a displayed and overweening consciousness of strength on the other, inflict wounds which are among the most difficult to heal. Charity leaves the plain of contest to the two combatants, without waiting to see the issue. But nowhere is this truth so extensively applicable as in family differences of faith, where the parties reside together, and where each is influenced by zeal. The principle is precisely the same on which it is commonly remarked, that domestic feuds are, of all others the most bitter and most irreconcilable. Assailant and defendant both demand an influence over each other's mind, which neither yields. Both conceive themselves at liberty to abandon the rules of courtesy, and neither grants the liberty. Both conceive that affection ought to prevent offence from the harshness of terms, and im-

plied suspicion of integrity, but neither admits it in himself. Both secretly feel that the subject on which they are engaged, is paramount to all the partialities of natural affection.

Here Mr. Morley believed he had reason for apprehension. He was aware that the school in which Maria had received her late religious instructions, was one likely to make the deepest impression on her mind. Two letters which he had received from his sister-in-law, previous to his own change, sufficiently convinced him of this. But it gave him little uneasiness while he knew of no fuel to feed the flame of jealousy, and nothing solid with which his daughter's opinions could come in collision. He would have preferred her uniting with a less exclusive communion, and told her so. Yet his preference was not sufficiently strong to thwart her inclinations. But now that every member of the family at home had felt, and taken, a part in the subject of religion, the face of things was altered. Nothing had ever seriously disturbed the harmony of his house. The sisters had ever been devoted to each other. A separation in religious belief, if it did not cool the ardour of their attachment, might somehow qualify their affection. Or, at least, it would bring new temptations. It would demand a

caution and forbearance hitherto uncalled for, and in some measure painful. It might create a reserve in minds that had been congenial, and open to each other: for it is often the first outlet of affection from the heart, and it is widened by the escape of the remainder. And although he might not dread an evil so serious as this, there was enough to alarm him still.

The course which Mr. Morley had prescribed for himself and family was one of prudence. He prohibited the introduction of any subject which might touch the particular views of Maria, or give room for any discussion in which they were involved, until he had conversed with her himself. He examined, with care, both sides of the question. And he did so with candour. He cared very little which side was right. And he was perfectly willing to relinquish opinions which he could not believe of primary importance, or connected in any way with the primary doctrines of the Gospel, rather than encounter the more formidable alternative of a division in his family. Mrs. Morley and Clara, therefore, perfectly understood the manner by which he evaded the challenge of Maria. And they were not sorry to observe the success of his management.

On the following afternoon the sisters were alone together; and Maria renewed her effort.

Clara explicitly declined the discussion of a question which she had not examined. And all that her sister could obtain from her was, a promise to investigate it with her at another time. "In the meanwhile," she added, "I fear no investigation can ever reconcile me to a separation from the great body of the Church of Christ. Many of our friends, in the village, have recently obtained the same hope with myself. So, too, have our parents. There is something too endearing in the idea of a perfect union with God's people on earth, and especially with those whom we have always loved, to suffer me to relinquish it. You will pardon me if I say that I have strong prejudices here. Instead of examining whether a rite of a Church has been properly administered, in one, or another, form, so strong are my feelings on another part of the question between us, that I should be irresistibly tempted to begin my inquiries there. I would set out with the admission that you are right, and that I am consequently wrong. But then I would ask, if two individuals are mutually convinced of their own correctness in their opposite views, in the manner of administering an ordinance, and each entertained a persuasion of the piety of the other, whether there is not a radical defect in a system, which, on account of this difference,

sunders these friends, and utterly forbids their uniting in the most affecting emblem of love. Or, if this disunion be the proper effect of such a diversity of sentiment, then I am at a loss why the Saviour has not left us an express and positive direction, in respect to the manner of this rite, and especially so if such disunion were to be occasioned by it, and he had taken so much pains to inculcate harmony among his disciples. It must be admitted, at best, that revelation is not clear enough on the matter of our difference to prevent the learned and the good from taking opposite sides. This alone convinces me that it cannot be a matter of importance. But it is rendered a matter of almost vital importance, if taking one view of the question debars us from an intercommunion with those who hold the other. Now I am not sure that this is not assuming an authority which no Church on earth has a right to exercise. Any way of thinking, which involves a principle of this magnitude of evil, seems to me to carry its condemnation on its own front. And I am so tempted to fly from it that I find it hard to examine its features."

"Sister!"

"I know there is something of a harshness in this mode of expression. But it is difficult to

avoid an appearance of harshness on a subject so repulsive. The very terms which it suggests, unpleasant as they are, are a fair transcript of the images it brings before us. I am sure it cannot be possible for you, Maria, to reflect upon it, without feeling your tenderest affections rudely assailed; or without lamenting that any sentiment can be found in the Bible, which, while it effects no possible good, thereby rives the bands of spiritual union."

Maria did not like this appeal. She was not prepared for it. Yet to parry it now was impossible. To answer it was equally so. She felt that it was unfair to allude to her sensibilities on a point in regard to which they were so vulnerable. Yet to say so, it occurred to her, was almost giving up the question: For a principle which in its simplest form could produce such an effect on the heart, seemed hardly reconcileable with the harmonizing precepts of the Gospel, while it appeared to frown on sensibilities which were never forbidden, and which are necessary to our happiness.—But Maria was able to rally herself at least for the present. She accused herself of weakness in the retreat which a momentary silence had indicated. Her favourite argument, of the duty of self-denial, was at hand. But Clara

gave a sad shock to this by the inquiry, 'whether we are at liberty to make an artificial cross for ourselves, any more than to create temptations to test our obedience or strength—and particularly when we are doing violence to our nature, without a prospect of real good, either to our own souls or those of others.'

The discussion came near to personality, as such discussions usually do; and although neither of the sisters was disposed to inflict pain in the bosom of the other, neither was insensible of receiving it. Any unhappy allusions that were made, referred to the disunion of their profession, and to the disappointed hopes of both. Both wept; but neither felt disposed to yield.

Such was the state of things in the night with which this narrative commenced; when the prayer at the family altar revived afresh the feelings of the afternoon. Mr. Morley had made it a leading petition that the great Head of the Church would unite with each other the hearts of all his household. A petition in which Maria could heartily join, though she saw less hope of its accomplishment, and felt more the necessity of special influence to crown her own efforts with success.

During the succeeding week very little transpired worthy of record, excepting that a private interview between the father and daughter, in the library of the former, effected no other end than that of displaying the candour of the one and the firmness of the other, and it might be added, the affectionate feelings of both. Yet it would have been obvious to an observer who had known all the parties a year before, that something of thoughtful concern occupied the bosoms of them all. The season was approaching in which three of them were publickly to espouse the cause of the Redeemer: but this was no ground of sadness with either. They looked forward to that event with all the confidence that attends a sincere hope in his promises.

Oh let it not be said that the sundering of pious relatives at the table of Christ is of too little moment to merit all this solicitude. The young Christian, whatever his natural age, anticipates that solemn occasion, as a marked era of his life—as the high festival of sympathy—as the sacramental cement between the children of God—as the type of the marriage supper of the Lamb—as the symbol of separation between the redeemed and the lost. And even the aged Christian, who has trodden far on the

way of his pilgrimage, looks back to such periods as distinguishable goals in his life, and gathers a freshness of feeling from the society of kindred faith. But where the partakers of the same flesh and blood are about to avouch a unity of interests in the representation of the family of Christ, who does not see the light of a spiritual affection received and reflected from each other there. In the duty of prayer, there may indeed be the blending of faith and love. But it is an act that brings not at once to the sight the glad society of Heaven: there is something of an *effort* to fore-gather the future; and though it remind us of the group above, it does so by reminding us at the same time, that we belong to the militant below—for prayer is not the occupation of spirits consummated in glory. But the festival of the Lamb that was slain is the forth-shadowing of the very employment of purified souls, who ascribe "power and riches, and wisdom and strength, and honour and glory and blessing," to Him that died and rose again. It is the very preparative scene that brings to our view the engagements of the blessed. Let the heart be filled with a celestial love—let a holy gratitude assist in giving birth to its emotions—and there is not a place beneath the throne of God, so

rich and so happy, to his adopted children.—And then a *first* communion!—who does not recollect the swellings of hope—the meek confidence, rising above timidity and fear—the farcast thought from type to antitype—the aspirations for holy unison—the panting of a thirsty spirit—the lofty expectations, struggling with diffidence of self?—

The three Morleys were yet infants in Christ. With all the ardour and simplicity of children they loved. But they could do no less than mourn, that Maria, dear as she was to all of them, was to stand off from the tendered exchange of pledges. It looked like a solitary state of spiritual being, hapless and isolated. And she, too,——would she not realize that desolation of feeling which a divided member of a household would encounter at this spectacle?

Poor Maria! To her all conversation on the approaching occasion carried new distress. At one time, she sighed for the presence of her Aunt. At another, she doubted whether any sentiment ought to keep her back from a participation at the Table; or whether there was not some inconsistency in such a requirement. And then, again, she blamed herself for listening to the voice of temptation, when it became

her to exhibit the fortitude of a decided Christian.

One thing tended to increase the unhappiness of Maria's mind: It was the respectful deference paid to her feelings, by both parents and sister—the great delicacy with which they ever touched on the approaching occasion; and the care which they seemed to take to render her situation happy. They knew the nature of her conscientious scruples; and they cautiously avoided inflicting through them any additional pain. This she saw and felt; and while it filled her bosom with gratitude, it rendered the struggle there more severe than ever.

The eventful morning arrived. It was a lovely Sabbath All nature appeared to smile at its opening, and to hail the day, as if a common interest in what was to distinguish it here, were felt by the inanimate creation.

We may not justly deny the influence of either weather or scenery on minds that are sensitive, and that are intent on some great purpose of life. And yet we may be ignorant of the causes of certain effects produced by either: effects that settle down in the memory, and become visible in every retrospect of the past. It is not superstition. It is not the speculations of an auguring temper. It is the im-

pressibility of feelings, which without reflection on our own part, receive the image of all that is passing near them, and catch the tints of the colouring around them.

And yet are there moods, too, when we are more sensible to the effect of contrasts, than to a congeniality of appearances around us: when a deeper impression is produced on the sunken spirits by the cheerfulness of men and things, than by the most lugubrious sound or sight of sorrow: moments, when the appearance of happiness in others, or the cheerful aspect of nature, looks like an intentional mockery of our woes—a sarcasm on the bitterness of our grief. Sorrow may be jealous, irritable, and suspicious, when neither quality could claim a natural seat in the mind. And though not one of them was brought into visible play in Maria Morley, had she examined the chambers of her heart, she would have found some of its furniture unsuited to a residence of the Holy Spirit: for, amiable as she was, there was a latent proneness to murmur at the unhappiness of her lot: latent to herself; for had it met her own eye a generous temper would have flashed in the consciousness of diminished dignity of character.

The village Church had been crowded for some months past, in the services of the week, as well as of the Sabbath. It was now literally overflowing. Christians of the neighbouring towns, who during a revival of religion are in the habit of visiting its place of operation, to catch and bear back a portion of the holy fire to their own less favoured part of Zion, had sembled in numbers. At an early hour, and without a sound of confusion or bustle, every worshipper had taken his place. And an observer might have marked an air of expectancy diffused among them all.

In a scene such as this the most decided opponent of a revival is likely to forget, for the time, both his reasonings and his prejudices. Had enthusiasm uttered one of her incoherent notes—had the excitement of mere passion announced itself in an act or a voice, there were those present who would have been gladdened by an evidence of the validity of their objections; or at least relieved from an undesirable participation in the solemn feelings of the hour. However we may pity or despise the ravings of fanaticism; or the contemptible efforts to arouse mere animal feelings, we are compelled to yield our attention without an effort to divert it, when

the "stately steppings" of the Most High are distinguishable to the sight.——

I shall not soon forget the remark of a military officer made on an occasion similar to the one before us: "He who on the eve of a bat-"tle cowers before the loud and tumultuous "shout of the enemy, loses that presence of mind "which might enable him to suspect a conscious "weakness from the war-cry of the foe, and "that might teach him to repel the violence of "confusion, by system and coolness. But he "who has been on the eve of a battle may "know that there is nothing so apalling in the "stratagems of war as the firm tread and death-"like silence of a fixed-bayonetted corps.— "Here is time for thought; but it is thought "that dwells on certain and deliberate carnage. "I have considered this applicable to the pre-"sent scene. The opposer of religion in a "place of religious confusion may be affected "alarmed, and confounded and yield alike his "passions and his judgement: or he may be "excited by a sense of the ridiculous: or, a self-"collectedness may keep him on his guard; "and indignation against prostituted reason "may create a renewed aversion to the sober-"est truths of the Gospel. But in the stillness

"of such a scene as this, I have seen the proud-
"est votary of reason quail."

And so, too, have I. I have beheld him looking with a dilated eye on hundreds around him, who, without meeting his gaze, imparted the dark solemnity of their hearts to his own. I have seen in the effectual effort to array his reason against the host that conscience led in his bosom, while he felt as if the ground were heaving beneath him; and as if from the midst of the crowd he was singled out by the stern gaze of an offended God; singled out, and ALONE—as every condemned sinner shall stand, in the throng awaiting the Judgement doom. And the simplest sentence recorded on the page of revelation, and repeated by lips the most artless, has told "trumpet-tongued" with the power of Almighty breathing. I have dissected again and again, the materials of such a scene. I have tried to account, by some plain rule of analogy, for effects so powerful at the moment, so permanent and efficient when that moment was past. But I could discover nothing artificial in the movements of this moral machinery—nothing gotten up—nothing preconcerted. Every soul addressed himself to the occasion, consentaneously, and for himself. The leading feature of the whole was a disco-

verable fixedness of thought; and the only mark of emotion was the quiet tracing of the tear, or the fallen visage, that noted a still more redundant sorrow.

Give all these symptoms to a single individual: and he that assents to evangelical truth shall call it the work of God: and can it be less so when with a mighty march they spread through the bosoms of a community? And is it any more an evidence against the Divine power of such effects that they have their seasons and are gone, than it is an evidence against the reality of the work on the day of Pentecost that its duration was brief? In both cases the results are as lasting as life in the hearts and lives of many. And strange were it if in both cases—as in individual instances of serious impression—there were not some whose new-found hopes were as the "morning cloud and the early dew:" Strange, if there were not in the mass that witnessed both, fears and emotions that were transient as the scene itself. There is not a cavil that is applied to the changes effected in a general work of grace, that does not reach to particular examples in ordinary seasons. Produce the conviction in the minds of a hundred at once, that the spirit of God is earnest and urgent, and you have effected the

same end that would have been accomplished in each of the hundred, had that conviction reached them when a thousand leagues apart. Separate an individual from the little circle in which he moves, by a change in his spiritual circumstances, and a lesson is conveyed to the remaining members of that circle, which, in a greater or less degree, is felt as a warning, and possibly carries a sense of danger to one or more. This is a fact of daily observation. But let not the example be solitary. Take the number of four or five, and it is no matter of surprise if we see the ratio of effects proportioned to that number: and still less so if these effects multiply themselves. Add to this the awakened zeal of Christians, which plays more than a single part in the day of refreshing—sending up the prayer of faith for the blessing of Heaven, and acting as a means on earth to excite the attention of the careless.

A revival, then, is the same system of means, exercised on a larger scale, which is successfully adopted in separate and particular cases,—with the simple difference of a multiplied force, and a united faith. And if a continuance of these means, on the part of Christians, do not extend their influence through every bosom, the reason is still the same with that which we

assign to the failure of extraordinary opportunities on the part of the sinner. The very tendency of the Gospel is to harden, where it does not melt down the natural opposition of the heart. And that tendency is the more decisive, as the privileges and calls are greater and louder.

It was they who had witnessed all this, who assembled at the present auspicious hour. To many of them the scene was novel. It is true, that they had seen the spreading of the communion-table many a time before. But it was invested with a character to which they had been strangers. Some of them had a sacred right to a seat at the board; and they knew of its comforts, and they prized its mercies. But even to most of these there was much that was super-added on the present occasion. Others were to touch these symbols with a yet untried hand. While in the breast of others again, a repressed sigh was labouring to escape, at the thought that a barrier yet stood between them and the consecrated table.

The services of praise and prayer were impressive, and even affecting. In the latter the Pastor was singularly gifted. His desires flowed forth with all that natural ease, and all that fervency of expression, that betokened a mind familiar with a throne of grace, and, in its near-

ness, catching and returning a spiritual warmth. His language was rich ; but it was in Scripture collocation ; as if his wish and his effort had been to address Deity in terms of his own. It was prayer in its true characteristic simplicity. There was no secondary motive ; no endeavour to affect the feelings of the assembly—no covert design to arouse the conscience of the unaffected, or to alarm the fears of the careless—no denunciation—no semblance of an artifice which betrays attention to a double object, that of addressing himself to both God and man—no prostitution of the great purpose of petition—no wresting of its end. It was prayer as it should be,—the offering of a singleness of heart, that asked the ear of the Almighty, to speak to it alone. And, I thought, had the veriest opposer followed the workings of that mind, while he would have seen no stratagem that levelled a side-handed blow at himself, he must have felt at what an infinite remove was his own spirit from the place of that spirit that had now entered " within the vail."

And in the reflection that other spirits around him had risen, too, he would have known that sense of isolation which sometimes steals over " the left of God." And when the petitioner presented the hopes and desires of the Christian, he plead the security of the ground on

which he stood, its stability and its assurance—the ground of blood-sealed promise. He spake of the love of Jesus—and thought of the message of Martha and Mary, strengthened by that reminding, "he *whom thou lovest*"—and I knew that human lips can prefer no plea more prevalent. And when he held the lambs of the flock in the arms of prayer, and spake of their feebleness and their fears, their dangers and their wants, I fancied the up-lookings of the young disciples as rays converging to their common point—the throne of paternal mercy. And there was a tenderness, a solicitude, and a sweetness of expression, in the tone and manner of the act that carried imagination to a greater than that pastor—the great and good shepherd of Israel.

The discourse which succeeded was a plain and sensible exhibition of the design and privileges of the sacramental supper. In this, too, there was one thing worthy of notice in the speaker—for orator he was not: it was the occasion that produced the impression of oratory, and acted silently like the gesticulator behind the Roman declaimer, giving force to the declamation. The distinguishing point to which I allude, was the use that was made of the sufferings and death of the Redeemer. No attempt was made to call into action unnecessary

sensibilites, or to excite the passions where they could be of no practical value. The pangs of the dying Saviour were mentioned with pathos: but the feelings were not allowed to spend and exhaust themselves on an object of mere pity, though that object were the agonies of Him "who gave himself for us." It was the consequences of sin, which such a spectacle presented—it was the evidence of both the ability and the will to save, even to the uttermost—it was the demonstration of love—it was a soul-piercing reproof of ingratitude—appealing only to those sensibilities which are intimately connected with our practice—it was these materials which were woven into the address of the speaker: and not a communicant who afterwards sat down at that table could have escaped the reflection that purity, love, activity, and obedience, were parts of a pledge he was engaged to redeem.

When the ordinances of God are thus made the instrument of rendering our sense of duty discriminating and quick, they become powerful auxiliaries to promote a holiness of life. But whenever their great end is kept out of sight, they as easily become the means of encouraging a hypocritical hope.

At the conclusion of the sermon, the names of more than sixty persons were repeated by the minister; who formally invited them to the preliminary act of admission to the fellowship of the Church. These persons arose; and presented themselves in the middle aisle, facing the pulpit. He now read a form of publick covenant, in which the newly-admitted members confessed their faith in the leading doctrines of the Bible, their sense of guilt, and their humble hope in the Gospel; while they renounced a life of sin, and solemnly promised, in dependence on God, to devote the future to the service of Him, to whom they now dedicated body and spirit. This profession and covenant were succeeded by an affecting charge: it was one that inforced obligations lasting as life, and reaching in the effects of fidelity or apostacy, throughout eternity itself. What an engagement was here! what a fealty avowed! what a high and holy calling!——And yet is the responsibility of that act no greater than when invested with less of the circumstance of publicity and form. If it were rendered more memorable by the manner in which it was imposed and assumed, nothing adventitious, and nothing of human injunction, attached to it an artificial character. That very form, as far as

it is possible to ascertain, preserved a close resemblance to the admission of members in the primitive days of the Church. And though I know not how far a general position may be hazarded, yet, as far as my own observation has extended those churches which render the admission of members alike solemn and publick, have been those in which the spiritual interests have been most carefully watched, discipline the most rigidly enforced, and the means of grace the most signally blessed.

It is impossible to describe the effect of this ceremony on the mind of an interested spectator without bringing near much that did not meet the eye, but reached the understanding through another medium. Yet much there was visible that was intelligible without the aid of an interpreter. The aged sinner was among that band of young disciples. Three score and ten had left their track as they passed over him: And they had covered his heart with an armour impenetrable as the rind of Leviathan to all but a commissioned Ithuriel's spear. Here he now stood, submissive and docile and simple-hearted as the child of two summers. He did not weep; but there was a tenderness in his countenance that sweetly attempered with the mellowness of age.——And others

were there, whom three score and ten had nearly reached: and there were less mature: and the youth and the maiden: the late bold infidel—the proud opposer—and the contemner of the sanctuary. What a diversity of character a few months since! What a lovely amalgamation now!——Spirit of God! how wonderful thy transforming influence. A few months since, and the gentlest in that band was utterly intractable. The overweening moralist stood haughtily aloof. The lover of pleasure revelled in contempt of every warning. The drunkard was lighting the torch at both ends to consume body and soul.——Yet there they stood, enrolled under the banners of the Cross. And their hatred and their loves, their fears and their hopes and their joys, might have met each other without a jar. And they did *meet* together, as they never met before. In the prayer that terminated this part of the Ministers duty, they met in a harmony like that of Heaven.

I had observed that the loft of the choristers was nearly empty. Its usual occupants were the best singers in the congregation, without distinction of families. But all of these were now, with a single exception, numbered among the visible Church. By a preconcerted ar-

rangement—but one that was novel to me—the leader of the choir struck the first words of a hymn familiar to the memory of almost every worshipper there,

"Come thou Fount of every blessing
Tune my heart to sing thy grace;
Streams of mercy, never ceasing
Call for songs of loudest praise.

Jesus sought me when a stranger
Wandering from the fold of God;
He to rescue me from danger,
Interposed with precious blood.

Oh to grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrained to be,&c."

The effect was sudden, sweet and powerful, as they filed off with this symphony, to the spread table in the right aisle of the building. That mingling of voices might have penetrated every hearer. The most fastidious ear would have heard melody, even in the untrained sounds of the ungifted, and in the broken and tremulous utterings of age. But in the clear and strong emphasis of the words

Jesus sought me when a stranger
Wandering from the fold of God;

there was the musick of the soul. It was poured forth in the natural flow of feeling. It was caught up by others who rose from their seats, as that company passed, and united their voices as they brought up the rear.

A general invitation had been given to strangers of other denominations to partake in the commemoration ; and it was accepted by many. But the song of Zion was not more general. The impression which it made was too deep, and too universal, not to carry its meaning into every mind ; and not to leave a home-felt conviction with those who were silent—"I *have* no part or lot in this matter." The solitary chorister who occupied the orchestra and who with others had a thousand times sung the praises of the Redeemer's kingdom, sat a mute observer of the passing scene : for there was a hallowedness in the whole, that checked the mockery of unfelt praises.

——Oh how often have I witnessed that strange and thoughtless daring of the unconverted sinner, while he sung of Heaven's glory and of the Saviour's love : or, in strains that might confound the most secure, he told of the stern justice of an unreconciled God, and of the doom of the lost! Such and so far is the infatuation of the heart! He that is standing on the shelving edge of the Abyss, without an emotion save the very pleasure of the deed, sings of its horrors thoughtless of himself—himself the subject of the song!

I know that an unconverted soul can listen with pleasure to the eloquent tongue that describes the terrors of a dark eternity, and the amusement shall be in that power of description. But passing this is it, far past this, when his own lips take up the theme of his personal fate, and his very vanity is indulged in the act. Is there in the history of an immortal spirit a deed of doing so strange?

For once it was not so here. There was a conscious contiguity of another world. Every impenitent spectator would have felt as would the condemned criminal feel, when bidden to amuse himself in chaunting the equity of his impending doom. Or, each would have feared to have mingled a note of his own with these of a lofty hope, as if the jar of hypocrisy would tempt the anger of Heaven.

But MARIA—unhappy Maria! feelingly alive to all that was before her, hers was a trial that shook alike the spirit and the frame it inhabited.

> "She could not weep
> "The very source of tears was dry."

Friend and acquaintance, parents and sister, had gone and left her; not alone, but in an ideal world of living imagery—every feeling of distress personified before her. She heard, re-

ceding in its distance, the sweet warbling of her sister's voice, distinguished by its rising and its mellowness. Oh was it thus, when at B——, her fancy had once awakened those sounds? The pleasure of past anticipation was changed into pain:——she had there drank the surface of her cup—it was now the wormwood and the gall. Her "cherished all of visionary bliss" had fled with its bright light, leaving her bosom cheerless and sad.

The musick ceased. Maria gazed with others, at the guests of yonder table. At one time, she felt an impulse to rise, and walk alone to that spot: and the pause in the service was favourable to her purpose. But she felt spell bound to her seat. At another, the whole nature of the ordinance was changed before her. It was any thing but a festival of love. It was a gloomy display of—she knew not what, but with which *she* had nothing to do. It was not religion. It was not a sacred ordinance. And at another moment again, order succeeded confusion: And she thought of her own piety as a solitary thing, that fitted not the nature of her social feelings, and that decreed against the exercise of her best and happiest affections.

——So past the last heavy hour of that morning. An assistant minister, who was present,

concluded the services, with a practical exhortation to the members of the Church, and an address to the spectators. And to one, at least, it was a period of partial relief, when he dismissed the assembly.

Three weeks had rolled by, when a visible alteration in the state of Maria's health attracted the attention of the family. Her natural colour had forsaken her cheek, save when flushed by a momentary excitement. She carried within her a leaven of melancholy which mixed itself with every thing, and imparted the appearance of painful effort to the smile of pleasantry, or to the light look she would have assumed under the little incidents that might have rallied her spirits.

She had more than once introduced the subject nearest her heart; but mildly and tenderly as her arguments were met, they were easily repelled by a reasoning for which she was not prepared; or, perhaps, by a skill in controversy superior to her own—and it was of very little importance which. She was silent in her defeat, but not convinced. She was persuaded that others could answer her father if *she* could not. There were successful weapons in the hands of some, if *she* did not possess them. And nothing less than the defeat of Mr. Wythe

himself, would have weakened her convictions, or loosened her tenacity of opinion. And yet there was no pride of sentiment—no inflexibility arising from irritated feeling. It was the power of former conviction retaining its seat in the assurance of stability: And its effects pervaded her whole moral system. She felt that an alteration in her views would re-modify this: she would become a different being: Her fears and her enjoyments, as a Christian, would be of a different class: and in these she dreaded any change—such and so universal, may be the influence of unessential views. Thousands consider the religion of others in its bearings on the heart and the mind, as widely distinct from their own, while the grand principles of both are admitted to be the same. There is something of the familiar, but undefinable, sensation of *home*, which belongs to religious opinions rather than to any other, and which attaches a strangeness to *all* that is not identically the same. Man, too, is the creature of impressions. The least shade of prejudice alters the aspect of other's piety. Although the reality of that piety may not be questioned, yet is there something in its complexion which renders it foreign: it may be the property of a neighbour and a friend, but it is not *home*.

It may have its conveniences and its advantages, but it wants something to reconcile us to the abandonment of our present habitudes of feeling and thought. It is hence, for the most part that our jealousies are awakened when a small principle of our belief has been rudely grasped by one of another creed. It was not the value of the principle in itself: it was that it composed a part of our intellectual familiarities; and an attempt to divest us of it is recognized as an invasion of our domicile. And it is the same partiality which renders us unwilling to compromise in aught that relates to it.

The relatives of Maria Morley saw the declining state of her health with a concern far deeper than her own. While she thought but little of it, and scarcely felt that the ravages of disease were slowly, though gently, stealing life away, they marked the weekly change with thoughts of melancholy augury. Her desire that her aunt might be invited to pay them a visit, made with a seriousness that looked foreboding to Mr. Morley, was freely granted. A few days afterwards, this invitation was answered by the personal presence of Miss Nares. She beheld the change in her neice with astonishment and grief. But she could hardly repress the pleasure which she received, on find-

ing that all her apprehensions of Maria's stability, in "following the Lord fully," were entirely groundless; a cheering intelligence, which was communicated to her on the first night after her arrival. A renewed, and more implicit confidence existed between the two. Their evening walks, and their retired closettings, were frequent.——The house of the Morleys was overshadowed by the distrust of a DIVIDED FAMILY.——

Previously to the arrival of Miss Nares, Maria had no confidential bosom in which she could repose the secret of her soul. And that secret, as such, was preying, like the canker-worm, on the place of its confinement. To Clara, formerly her sole associate, she had frequently attempted to unburden her mind, but the attempt was always unsatisfactory and vain. And it was now a relief that she could share the weight of her cares with one who understood them as well as herself.

If it be true that a restricted confidence restrains the action of love, and that this restraint, in its turn, passes as an entering wedge into the breach, it is likewise true that the withdrawer himself feels the influence of his own withdrawal. Clara saw and felt the first of these truths with sadness. Maria was not en-

tirely insensible to the second. But her habit of communicating with her Aunt, on a subject which ramified through all the little affairs of her life, was now rendering that lady her exclusive counsellor, and gradually weaning her from the society of her sister. Kind, tender, and affectionate to all around her, she still discovered a want of reciprocity in all but her Aunt. She loved: but her love wanted that congeniality of character without which it was imperfect; and which a difference in religious sentiment unhappily precluded.

A stranger would not have discovered the least dissonance in the household. He would have seen that mutual exchange of good offices which makes up so much of a Christian courtesy. But one who knew well that family, years gone by, and who entered into its familiarities again, could not fail to understand that a new moral dynasty was begun within it.

All this Miss Nares deprecated, in common with the rest. 'But if it were an evil inseperable from the faith of Maria,—connected as that faith was, with its necessary rules of exclusiveness, and strong as it was in a mind of such active materials, it was a less evil than violating the dictates of conscience.' Satisfied, therefore, that it was a dispensation of

Providence, she inculcated in her niece—what she exercised in herself—resignation to the Divine will.

One evening when Maria had retired early after the fatigue of a walk, her absence from the domestick circle rendered her health the topic of conversation; which, by a very natural transition led to the state of her mind. Mr. Morley expressed his regret on account of a pensiveness that seemed deep-seated, and that was spreading its effects through the rest of the family. Miss Nares acquiesced: while she "considered it one of those trials to which God subjects the best of his people on earth, in order to prepare them for a state of purer existence."

"We ought to see the hand of God," said Mr. M. "in all the circumstances of our lives. But there are certainly some sorrows which bear harder upon us than others: and among these we may class such as have been brought upon us by our imprudence; or such as have arisen from an unnecessary cause in the indiscretion of others."

Miss Nares saw an equivoque in the language of her brother-in-law.

He explained. But he did not conceal his opinion, "that a difference in religious views

was, in the present instance, the destroyer of domestic peace."

This, too, Miss Nares was prepared to admit; and she could cordially lament both the cause and the effect. "It had been her earnest prayer that the Great Head of the Church would prevent the latter by removing the former."

"But do we not make the difficulty ourselves?"—he asked. "That Maria should differ from us in what we all consider secondary things, is of no importance. I have no strong prepossessions respecting the manner of a rite in the Church of God: but when any system requires an absolute separation among his own people, I cannot but believe it fraught with mischief which a pure Gospel will not bring. I should believe thus under any circumstances; but when I rue the consequences to such an extent under my own roof, I find my charity somewhat drooping, in respect to the inventors or abettors of a scheme which seems expressly designed to strike at the root of charity."

"Is that Christian?"

"It is not so, I admit. But I leave you to judge what effect is likely to be produced upon my mind by the conduct of a denomination who acknowledge their belief in my sincerity,

and yet refuse to unite with me in the commemoration of the Redeemer's death. An act which designates a want of Christian love in the most plain and pointed manner, is one which, of all others, is most likely to destroy all charity in the bosom rejected."

"You mistake us in two things, Brother. We believe you to be Christians; but we cannot believe there is a complete sincerity in examining so important a question, or you would arrive at the same conclusion with us; and while this defect exists, how could we harmonize together. Moreover, it is not fair to say that we want charity for you. We believe there are degrees of sincerity, and that prejudice, or pride, too often qualifies the virtue."

"I must confess, then, that my dilemma is "more serious than ever. Your conclusion "that all would agree with you, if they fairly "examined the subject, implies an infallibility "on your own part as positive as that of the "Church of Rome; and it leads, so far as it "goes to a similar exclusiveness: so true is "it that infallibility and exclusiveness go hand "in hand. Besides, who is to be the judge of "the degree of sincerity, while both parties "think they see with clearness, and each is "persuaded that he is a prayerful inquirer? "This very discrepancy teaches me the duty

" of Christian love. And even supposing the
" two parties equal in numbers, in learning,
" and in piety, how can I escape the inference
" of the fallibility of both? But this is only
" a part of my difficulty; and it is the smallest
" part. If you deny that, as a denomination,
" you want charity, why refuse to commune
" with us? If it be said that such a refusal is
" a small matter—of no material importance—
" then am I surprised that it is given, consi-
" dering the wide breach it makes between
" you and others. Yet you cannot con-
" sider it of small importance, because the act
" of communion is a bond of amity. We all know
" well that the primitive Christians recognized
" it as such. There were but two reasons why
" the Apostles excluded any who had ever been
" acknowledged Christians—heresy, and im-
" morality of life. To be consistent with them
" we must be confined within the same limits.
" In this, the Church of Rome is consistent:
" We are deemed heretics; and whether the
" charge is just or not, the plea is a scriptural
" one. Expediency out of the question, the
" act of separating the Children of God, on
" account of such a difference of opinion as
" ours, is unauthorized by the words of Holy
" Writ. I view the degree of separation as of

" more magnitude than our doctrinal diffe-
" rence—or rather our difference respecting
" the manner of a rite."

" Of *more* magnitude ?"——

" Yes ; even of more. For in the first place,
" it is not explicitly told us how that rite is to
" be performed, or there would not be a ques-
" tion on the subject. But even if we *were*
" distinctly informed of that manner, a depar-
" ture from it is neither immorality or heresy,
" while the ordinance itself is not denied. In
" the second place, it is the sacrifice of a prin-
" ciple of infinite importance for one that is
" finite."

" Indeed ! what can that be ?"

" The principle of *unity*. The Redeemer
" inculcated nothing with more earnestness
" than this ; and he founds upon it the success
" of the Gospel. In his affecting intercessory
" prayer, in behalf of his disciples and future
" believers, he annexes this reason for his peti-
" tion—' that they may be one even as we are
" one,' and that, for the following end—' that
" the world may believe that thou has sent me.'
" The Apostles after their master, took every
" possible pains to maintain unity in the Church.
" To this end, they were disposed to bear and
" forbear. They yielded to the weakness of

" others, wherever they could lawfully do so.—
" What an admirable example have we of this
" in the question of meats and holy days!

" But not communing together is, surely, no
" evidence of a want of proper unity."

" Then I hardly know what is. The com-
" munion was the visible line between the visi-
" ble Church and the world: and they alone,
" I have said were put without it, who were
" deemed unworthy in doctrine or practice.
" And this excommunication—to preserve con-
" sistency—was followed by a refusal of ordi-
" nary fellowship."

" But we do not refuse to unite with you in
" prayer; or to ask your own ministers to oc-
" cupy our pulpits."

" Therein is the greater inconsistency. The
" man whom I could desire to be the mouth of
" the people," must be one with whom I could
" sit at the Redeemer's table; whatever dis-
" qualifies him for the one, in his religious views,
" should render him unfit for the other."

" But when we say, we do not mean any
" thing uncharitable, our declaration ought to
be believed."

" There is certainly something so abhorrent
" in the term *uncharitable*, that every one dis-
" claims it. And hence I am told that many

" in your denomination profess to regret the
" exclusiveness of the sect: That even some
" of its teachers do so: but still we see no al-
" teration. Here inconsistency multiplies. To
" say that we mean one thing, and yet to prac-
" tice another—to avow Christian love, and
" yet refuse admission to its emblems—is cer-
" tainly going a step further. Now, where two
" individuals, whom nature or circumstances
" have rendered intimate, part in religious be-
" lief, there is at least a faint line of demarka-
" tion between them: but it may be too faint
" to do harm. Yet say what we will, there
" can be no unmingled feeling of charity be-
" tween those who render that line more dis-
" tinct by the mutual exclusion of each other
" from communion. An essential difference is
" felt. There is a want of something in the
" heart. There is an ungodly jealousy:—some-
" thing—something is wrong. It is in commu-
" nities as with individuals: A want of confi-
" dence destroys unity. And that especially
" when all connexion is refused in the very
" place where the concord of Heaven is typi-
" fied, and prejudices are supposed to be merged
" in affection. I would leave this to the con-
" science and candour of those concerned: I
" would appeal to their very sensations—to

"their own experience of feeling. The two "beliefs, in every such instance, must create a "consciousness of a very wide difference, not "in doctrine alone, but in a repulsive con- "trast."

Whatever the worth of these remarks, Miss Nares thought they were not without force. She found herself on the defensive, and attempted to change the field of debate. But her mortification was increased on finding that Mr. Morley was perfectly indifferent to the doctrinal question; and still more so on observing that he left it to her own convictions—that he was willing to admit the justice of either side—and that he treated with *sang froid*, a matter which she had regarded as momentous. She thought, too, that there was a dash of acidity in his manner. But here she was mistaken. His mind was indeed distressed, but it was not soured. It was in a state of mournful expectation; but it was incapable of confounding persons and opinions; or of attributing dishonourable motives to one whom he believed to be a sincere Christian. A master-poet has said,

"When sorrows come, they come not single spies
"But in battalions."

It was so here. Unsatisfactory explanations are the preludes to open ruptures: or to some-

thing that is kindred to them. Little misunderstandings that might be forgotten in social life, take shape and magnitude when they are brought to no good purpose palpably before the parties. Such, too, is the effect of many religious discussions. A tacit understanding that each may retain his own views, and a mutual agreement to differ, are, generally more politic than easy.

The two parties in the house of Mr. Morley made this discovery more frequently than was consistent with their happiness. Miss N. had often resolved to drop forever the subject of their differences. Then again something new would occur to her mind: something that was unanswerable. Yet every effort to convince was met by an almost provoking calmness, and ended with very little variety of effect. The truce which succeeded was like that under a Carthagenian flag. Seriously as it might have been made, its stability consisted in the excitement of the hour; it vanished when that hour was gone. It was forgotten under new temptations, which new hopes of a conquest created. Unhappily such truces serve rather to alienate than to unite. Even on neutral ground, Miss N. would pick up something which she mistook for a gauntlet; or discover what she regarded

as a weak point in the forces of her polemical adversary, that invited an attack.

In this state of things, the long absent son and brother returned. To the hearts of his parent, this event was a happy relief. To Clara it was not less so. She had long been weary of the discussions which almost every day renewed. Her spirits were jaded by the restlessness occasioned by fears of renewed hostilities from every little incident. She was tired of watching with apprehension, terms or expressions which might lead to some new inuendo, and thence to polemics again. Her brother's return would furnish new and lasting topicks.

Maria's expectations were not dissimilar.— If Thurston had a favourite sister, it was herself; and she indulged a vivid expectation that some good or other would result from his reaccession to the family.

But there were hopes with all of a more lofty character. He might partake of the influence of that work of grace in which the others had shared: and while the salvation of his own soul was secured, his superiour talents would become tributary to the cause of the Redeemer.

Thurston Morley was one whom his associates usually dignified by the appellation of high-minded. He was quick in his perceptions of

right and wrong; and tinctured a little with what is called a chivalrous spirit. Hasty, and often precipitate in his conclusions and feelings, he was impetuous and calm, volatile, moody, and serious in the same hour. In addition to all this there was a sprinkle of sarcasm in his disposition, which sometimes gave pain where he never intended it, and produced many a moment of mortification and self-reproach. But then he was affectionate in temper and ardent in his personal attachments.

The part which Thurston was destined to act under the paternal roof, was one that brought into play by turns, every characteristic that nature and education had given him. He was shocked beyond the power of concealment by the faded looks of Maria. He wept when he saw the feebleness of her attempts to participate in the cheerfulness of his own mind; and when he beheld the languor which invariably succeeded them. The alteration which he discovered in the religious views of the family, gave him neither pleasure nor pain; for there was nothing morose, nothing of a *studied* seriousness, to provoke a repulsive feeling. He bowed at the domestic altar with a respect, which, if it proceeded not from the heart, was prompted by an external reverence for the ser-

vice. He accompanied the family to the public religious exercises which were held so frequently during this remarkable period. His fears were partially aroused for his own future fate, when he observed the wonderful change which many of his former companions had undergone. He heard in silence, and without offence, the expostulations of one or two who professed a deep interest in his spiritual welfare.

All this was only a three day's history. There was no deep-wrought conviction of sin: no just idea of the corruption of his heart. He was uneasy; but his uneasiness arose from no distinct perception of the truth. He was disquieted: but it was a disquietude which he would have shaken off.

Alas how false may be our expectations here! The work of grace is one of Sovereignty; and the hand that achieves it must be divine. We may count on the impressibility of a friend. We may justly anticipate that certain means will reach his sensibilities. But beyond this, our prognostics are of little value. The most ready susceptibility may belong to one who, with all that is inviting before him, may stand aloof from the kingdom of Heaven. An awakened soul is indeed a spectacle of interest,

because we suspect an infinite and eternal crisis. But it indicates nothing of certain issue—nothing on which we may build an assurance of good. There is all that may give life to hope or fear: but there is no more.

Oh how little do we understand the details of a revival! How unfairly do we estimate much that makes up its brief but comprehensive history!—The searing of the conscience, the hardening of the heart—the gathering blindness in the midst of spiritual light, or the uplifting of the veil that hides eternity—the proud but secret opposition of a rebellious spirit—the powerful play of passion—the contention of principles embattling in the soul—the surrender of the affections, or the misgivings in withholding them—the murmuring of despair, or the dawn of faith—the stubborn incredulity, or the conflict of doubts—either is interesting in its individual exhibition; but when the whole are brought together within the range of the eye, they give the only fair developement of human nature that can be furnished on earth.

To see, and yet be insensible to even part of this is hardly possible. And the parents and sisters of Thurston judged rightly when they anticipated a pause in his mind, when he beheld the changes around him. But the past

experience of neither led to an apprehension which might be as reasonable as hope in his behalf. They little imagined that the rock on which their expectations were to beat was one in their own household.

Thurston's seriousness was suspected; but neither its nature nor its degree was exactly known, when, by an accidental circumstance, the dissonance of religious opinion among the members of the family came to his knowledge, despite of Mr. Morley's injunctions and pains to conceal it. Here was a new and interesting object of attention. It afforded him relief from all that vagueness of unhappy thought, in which his mind had been for a season suspended.

There is certainly no cavil taken from the armoury of Satan so powerful in the heart of the partially awakened sinner, as that of a doctrinal difference among professors of religion—saving alone the collisions of personal prejudice: especially where that difference is brought into visible activity in the group of his own associations. And the unhappy zeal of partizans in the midst of a revival has withered many a fair prospect for the soul, and left many a stain on a cause that was avowedly dear.

Thurston determined to examine a subject which appeared of such material interest to

his friends. He did not see, and he hardly thought, that such an engagement was not only foreign from the great question of his soul's safety, but in the present state of his mind, inimical to salutary reflection. Another difficulty occurred in his path: He could not discover how the subject in which he was now engaged could be necessarily connected with a separation of interests at the Communion. This perplexed and biased his understanding. He began to deprecate the consequences of a system that was 'alienating relatives and placing discord on the seat of harmony.' And the bitter temper of prejudice put to flight every thought of his own danger, and banished even the semblance of serious impressions. The descent was rapid; for the descent in such a case is usually rapid. From one who had taken the posture of an Inquirer, he was transformed into the veriest Pyhronist.

Nor was this all. Maria's declining health furnished him an argument, to which he had no right, but which he wielded to the severe vexation of his Aunt. His affection for his sister increased as it was by her circumstances, gave edge to a raillery which Miss Nares could not repel by admonition or warning. At one time, he would enter the parlour with a coun-

tenance of half-concealed gravity—ask a few questions and without a change of visage, infuse the severest ribaldry into the whole subject. At another, he would step with good earnest into the lists with his Aunt; who always concluded him, at the end of the debate, "a more hardened sinner than ever." One hour, he wished the whole family would agree on either side—"immersed, if they pleased, fathom deep, and cemented by soaking." Another, he would relax the muscles of Maria's face, to the great annoyance of Miss N. by some serio-comic sally.

Yet all this was not the venting of spleen: nor did it arise, entirely from a love of irony or ridicule. Much of it was designed to restore the unanimity of the family: and he fancied first fruits of success whenever he dissipated for a moment, the sad composure of his sister.

If habit do not always reconcile us to our situation in life, it diminishes the weight of our cares, or renders us less restive under it. A few months past, had the book of the future been opened to Mr. M. and his family, a sight of its dark page would have been appalling in the extreme. As it was, a faint hope of something better to come alleviated a present. And when disappointment succeeded these rain-bow

lights they would go out in one part of the horizon to appear in another. Such, and so constant is that tenacity of hope that begins with the first hour of youthful imaginings, and keeps reason in her strength against the assaults of despair. It is sometimes well when affliction comes, that the spirit is partially broken to bend the neck to the yoke and the shoulders to the burden, in a half-forgetfulness of past happiness. It is well that when the lights have been extinguished one after another, memory cannot always renew the whole;—a small number only are, at a time, within reach of her call. But it is more than well when, as the grasp on earth is loosening, that on Heaven is firmer: when as the world darkens, we approach to the light of a spiritual sun.—In some good degree it was so with the Morley's, save a single exception; but that exception could raise the winds of a storm at pleasure.

Thurston's respect for his father usually restrained him from any of those out-breakings which might have been apprehended from an excited irritability. Still he could not forgive Miss Nares. Regarding her as the great instrument of all the evil he saw, and of all he ever expected to see, he overlooked every good quality of her heart, misinterpreted her motives,

and seized every opportunity of embarrassing her feelings. "She did enough, at first,"—said he to his father,—"when she filled Maria's "head with these idle notions. If she had not "followed her pupil here, all would have been "well enough still. A proselyte to a new sys- "tem is always enthusiastic: but time might "have cooled that ardour, as time commonly "does. I never knew a young free-mason who "was not an enthusiast on his entering the "lodge: nor one whom I have not found be- "fore many months as lukewarm as myself."

"My son will recollect that the invitation to "his Aunt was given with his father's consent."

Thurston bowed. He was convinced of the duty of filial acquiescence. But he was not satisfied with the prudence of the measure which had produced his animadversion. The repulse, though gently given, drove him to another ground. "I must confess,"—said he,— "I do not know a single objection to "Chris- "tianity so strong as that of the bigotry which "many of its advocates evince. It is the very "temper that would light the fires of an *Auto* "*de Fe*. It wants but the power to be un- "merciful to the body; it is so already to the "heart. I had rather become an inmate of "La Trappe, or live where every one blesses

" my expectations when I burn a sous candle
" to our good lady of ——."

" Stay Thurston ; this is severe, undeserved-
" ly severe. You are trying and condemning
" one agent for the crimes of another. We
" are to judge men by their works. Let us do
" the same to Christianity. But let us not pass
" sentence on that Heavenly Agent for sins
" which she herself reproves, and of which she
" was never guilty herself."

" But is it not true,"—rejoined the son,—
" that this diversity of sects is the very soul of
" bigotry ? and as the natural consequence of
" religious freedom, is it not an evidence of a
" defect in Christianity ?"

" Not at all : neither premises, nor conclu-
" sion can be admitted. It is true that reli-
" gious freedom will lead to a variety of sects.
" But what then ? Wherever religious free-
" dom exists, piety and morality are most dif-
" fusive. Our own country is a fair example.
" Where difference of opinion is *tolerated*, as
" in Great Britain, the same truth holds pro-
" portionably good. The converse of this ap-
" plies to those countries in which an unquali-
" fied establishment exists ; and that in exact
" proportion to the strictness with which such
" an establishment is guarded. Moreover, an
" allowed diversity of sects is so far from being

" the soul of bigotry, that it is the best security
" against its encroachments. The history of
" the terrible Inquisition, to which you have
" adverted, is full to this point; it wants no
" auxiliary of proof."

" But, sir, to return to our country,—can we
" find a better instance of bigotry than in the
" denomination with which we first started ?"

" If it be so, the argument is still misplaced.
" Any denomination which excludes from com-
" munion those whom they allow to be exem-
" plary and evangelical Christians, so far in-
" fringes liberty of conscience, opposes free-
" dom of opinion, and raises the standard of
" religious despotism. But these are not le-
" gitimate consequences of true piety. They
" are not even a corruption of the truth. They
" arise from a human principle with which the
" truth has nothing to do."

" To alter my posture, then,—how is it that
" wherever zeal for Christianity exists, there
" always exists with it the pride or domination
" of piety. The history of the Church is writ-
" ten with blood: And, excepting in primitive
" days, it was the bigotry of professing Chris-
" tians that shed it. Even where it is admit-
" ted that the greatest purity of doctrines ex-
" isted, persecution has been scarcely less cruel

" to opposite opinions. Let me instance the
" Lollards and Puritans in their day. Among
" the first, how many were eager for havoc;
" how many held opinions incompatible with
" the welfare of society. The second, what-
" ever they were in the beginning, became op-
" pressors as soon as power changed hands:
" some of their published ordinances cannot
" be read without pity for their delusion, their
" narrow-mindedness, and even their cruelty.
" Take other parties:—Cranmer—the mild and
" amiable Cranmer—how shall we reconcile
" the deeds of his day with a disposition which
" nature rendered tender, without saying that
" religion rendered it cruel? And even Fene-
" lon himself has not departed with a name un-
" sullied with suspicion."

" What does all this prove? that our religion
" is sanguinary, or even imperfect? Did a
" single precept in the Word of God justify
" this unhallowed conduct or temper? not at
" all. The spirit of the age in which these
" people lived, will account for much of their
" bitterness of hostility. A hatred of all that
" belonged to the opposing side led to extremes,
" and even to contradictions of dealing. Un-
" due devotedness to certain tenets absorbed
" their thoughts, and left no room for some of

" the practical precepts of the Gospel. This
" will be ever the case where theory and prac-
" tice are kept distinct and apart, or where
" rites and ceremonies are unduly regarded.
" Some Christian virtue or other will be neg-
" lected. There may be piety; but it will be
" piety imperfect; and if you please, sometimes
" suspicious. It is a melancholy example of
" the perverseness of our nature, when we see,
" as we so often do, the pertinacious adherence
" of a good man to a matter of secondary va-
" lue; observe how it magnifies in his sight—
" how he grasps the straw with the tension of
" gigantic mind—exhausts his very energies on
" it—and even takes by it the very measure-
" ment of fundamental principles of practice.
" Poor human weakness is ever in danger of
" betraying the cause it has espoused. Hu-
" man pride mars the work that it touches.
" Human sight overlooks much that is most
" essential and most lovely. Human partiali-
" ties warp the judgement. And wounded hu-
" man vanity vents its revenge on things that
" are divine. I feel humbled when I hear of
" the failings of the best of men. But the
" pages of the Bible have taught me to look
" for inconsistencies, or at least to expect them.
" Nor is it less a subject of humiliation, and

" holy dependence when I see the most palpa-
" ble errors embraced by men whom I antici-
" pate meeting in Heaven. The writings of
" Fenelon, Massilon and Bourdaloue have fill-
" ed many an hour with pleasure mingled with
" surprize: but those of the manly, vigorous
" Pascal have often left me confounded that an
" intellect so discriminating and powerful, could
" cling to traditions, superstitions, and whims,
" from which I shall have imagined the weak-
" est mind would recoil. Yet, do I not observe
" the same thing where religion is out of the
" question—even in the moral sciences,—not
" to say sometimes in the physical ?"

" But why, if the Gospel were designed for
" all men, should it give rise to such a division
" of sects ? Why does it not promote unity
" among its followers ?"

" Your question is easily answered. If the Gospel produced all the effects you demand from it, then must it not only pass beyond its contemplated design, but it would require some other economy of moral government than that in which we live. It must suppose a change in the relationship in which we stand to God. As it is, no system of religion could have been given which all would understand alike in its diversified particulars. While human nature

remains as it is, the different constructions of our minds must influence their decisions in smaller points. Our judgements are warped by inclination or taste. Our education, and the circumstances under which we live, will produce their corresponding effects. The views of others, even without a conscious consent, possess their influence over us. We see the evidence of all this in the fact, that, not unfrequently, the very plainest practical injunctions are misunderstood or perverted. And matters that are not clearly revealed, and are not, therefore, of essential practical value, are sometimes the very ones which are assumed as most clearly defined, and of most material importance; and are thus made the very line of division. But then, to prevent all this, you require the operation of a miracle: a miracle which shall change the texture of the human mind and conform it to a universal similarity—which shall make the bias of our thoughts the same; and *compel* man to think aright. But what would be the consequence of such a miracle? not less than the destruction of our free-agency—the removal of our accountability to God. It is worthy of remark, too, that the Word of God anticipates these variations, instead of pre-supposing a power to prevent them. They existed

in the days of the Apostles before the Canon of Scripture was completed; and certain duties respecting them were enjoined."

Here Mr. M. opened the Bible and read part of the 14th Chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. He considered the differences of opinion in that Church, which called for the expostulations of the inspired penman, as much resembling some of the distinctions of sects in the present day. "Preferences," he conceived, "were not prohibited; though exclusive preferences were certainly so; and so too, was any thing else that militated against the exercise of a mutual charity."—From this he passed to the third chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians. "Here,"—said he, "appears a distinct lesson on this subject. The foundation on which those who have a saving hope shall build is Jesus Christ: *the gold, silver, and precious stones* are the fundamental truths of Christianity. *The hay, wood and stubble,* are the inventions of man. All of them may be built on the foundation that shall abide. The former will stand the ordeal of fire. The latter will perish. The *foundation* will remain in either case; but the superstructure of the errorist shall be destroyed;—"*he shall suffer loss but himself shall be saved.*"

"I would go even further,"—said Mr. Morley. "These differences, I am persuaded, are beneficial, upon the whole. They keep attention awake and active. They preserve the more important truths in a purer state. The action and re-action of Christian communities upon one another—where a proper temper is preserved—prevent both an inertness of feeling and a stagnation of principle. They lead to the extension of Christianity. They furnish a test of charity; and, by bringing that grace into frequent exercise, they render it healthy and vigorous. I cannot deny that the motives for zeal in propagating divine truth may be, and often are unhallowed. And where they are so, they will not pass the scrutinizing eye of God, unnoted. Still, out of this very evil He who "maketh the wrath of man to praise him," will extract good for his own kingdom. I have thought that the Apostle alludes to some such thought as this when he says—"Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will. The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely--but the other of love."—What then? notwithstanding every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice."

"This relieves but part of the difficulty,"—said Thurston, who felt somewhat shaken by the sober reasoning of his father, and disposed to shift his position still more. "The passage which you read last night previous to family worship, relating to the plainnesss of the way of life to the fool and way-faring men, contradicts facts which we see every day. Two readers of the Bible may adopt sentiments so much at variance that no fellowship can exist between them."

"I have already partly accounted for this"—said the respondent. "But I will go further. Strength of understanding, or a superior intellect, is not the best alembick of spiritual truth. The Scribes and Pharisees were more highly gifted in this respect, than the favoured Twelve. And yet they comprehended the Saviour's doctrines no better than these illiterate men. The things of God may be hidden from the wise and great while they are revealed unto babes in knowledge and understanding. And it is a display of sovereignty when they are so. Matters which belong to the soul's best interest are offered on the same terms to all. This would not be so if a greater degree of natural gifts gave one man an advantage over another. It is the disposition of the *heart* which guarantees the failure or success of an inquirer. Man

must be sincere before he may hope for success in holy things. He must second his inquiries with a practice corresponding with his knowledge. It may be true that infidelity fans the passions: but it was the passions that gave birth to infidelity. The child may support the parent; but it was the parent who brought the child into being. The same truth applies to fundamental errors in religion; and, in both cases, it is vapid boasting to triumph in the conclusions of a strong and unsanctified mind, while it is folly to gather objections from their ignorance of experimental truth."

"Is there not something uncharitable in such an imputation? Does it not imply a want of integrity in some whose honesty we have no right to suspect?"

"If so, we must charge the fault upon the Author of the Bible, for the imputation is from him. It is a melancholy evidence of human depravity that we are more disposed to act with dishonesty towards our Maker than towards our fellows: and the fact itself originates in a natural incredulity of Him whom we do not see, with whom we have no personal communication, and of whom we form the most fanciful conceptions. There is a secret agency between God and his creature which in a future revela-

tion will tell fearful secrets now kept in the darkness of the bosom. But after all there is something in the very nature of heresy which indicates a lamentable depravity in its cherisher."

"What is that?"

"It is that the heretic rejects the very principles which mortify the pride of the natural mind, demand personal sacrifices and inflict pain. If the difference of opinion which exists had no reference to what our nature hates, I should be more willing to seat the understanding as umpire, and there would be less suspicion of an integrity which it is painful to impeach. There may be what are called amiableness and morality, in the errorist; and he may feel confident of his own sincerity. We see these in the moral man whom grace has not renewed: but no sooner has he "come to himself," in answer to the calls of the spirit, than he discovers that beneath all his pretensions to sincerity and candour, there was a self-deception which he had never suspected, and a haughty disposition to rebellion under the livery of allegiance."

These were rather closer quarters than Thurston had sought. "I cannot see,"—said he, why God permits heresies to disturb a

Church which he desires to protect and to cherish!"

"You must have already seen that this is as natural an evil in the present state of man as any other. You have seen that it would require a perpetual miracle to prevent it. But the truth is, even this evil has its advantages. The Christian here is in a state of probation. Every thing denotes a condition of trial. Every thing is designed to purify and establish the heirs of glory. Keeping this in sight, let me refer you to higher authority than my own. An inspired writer has written—"there *must* be also, heresies among you;" and he assigns the reason himself,—"that they which are approved may be made manifest among you." Now this is effected in several ways, and especially in the following: The visible Church consisting of chaff and wheat, the tendency of heresies is to winnow the chaff from the wheat; Where the true doctrines of Christ are opposed in heart, by a false professor, there will be an attraction in those who hold more congenial views—an attraction which will draw them off from a body they might otherwise disturb. I might add, too, that heresies are to the Church what afflictions are to the Christian; they lead to consideration; they institute self-inquiry."

"According to this application of scripture,"—interrupted Thurston,—"every thing seems to be fore-named and pre-written."

Mr. Morley's brow lowered. "The feeling of that utterance is unworthy of my son," said he. "And yet as a sneer by no means adroit you have spoken of the most solemn truths. Yes; every thing *is* fore-named. There is not a feeling of the unconverted sinner, not an excuse, not an art, not a cavil, which is not directly or indirectly mentioned in the book by which we shall be judged. Our own views may appear peculiar to ourselves, and they generally do so; and so may our condition in the sight of God. We may rest in confidence on the singularity of our case as a ground of mercy; but we shall one day see our whole experience written in sun-beams on these pages; and we may be confounded at a voluntary blindness as deceptive to ourselves as it was presumptuous before God."

Mr. Morley spoke this in a tone of mingled tenderness and reproof. His voice fell as he drew to the close of the sentence: and it was accompanied with a look that reached where Thurston dared not gaze himself.

We know not what might have been the effect of a remark adapted to lay hold of his bet-

ter feelings under other circumstances. It is certain that he was startled now. But no sooner had he left the apartment than by an easy association he thought of his disputes with his Aunt: It was a theme which with its correspondencies was uppermost in his mind. And while he did so, it was with a secret exultation that Miss Nares was not present at his recent defeat: and in that exultation he forgot his personal concern in the late conversation.

The two parents and Clara remained in the parlour. "I entertain some hope,"—said the last,—that Thurston's mind may yet be impressed. He was certainly not insensible to your expostulation."

"We should have greater reason to do so,"—said Mr. M.—"if his mind were less occupied in controversy."

It was admitted by all that his present propensity was highly unfavourable to serious thought. And yet there was no remedy for the evil. He was not likely to relinquish it, while it subserved the double purpose of amusing himself and of tantalizing his Aunt.

At no later period than the succeeding day, a new freak called for all the patience of Miss Nares.

She was sitting near a window with the two sisters. Mr. M. was reclining on the sofa with a book. The door, which hung ajar, screened him from the sight of his son, who was entering the apartment with a countenance lighted up by some happy discovery—"Aunt, I have been to Jerusalem!"

"What does he mean?" said Maria.

"He will explain himself,"—replied Clara,—"it is not always easy to construe his meaning."

"Well then, I'll explain myself,"—said the brother. "I have read the whole history of that city and its inhabitants, down to the present day. I have found there all manner of deaths and murders, except drowning: do you understand me now?"

"Indeed I do not. As you sometimes say, I am no Œdippus."

"Well then, I will be clearer. I read an account of a man there who sent his son all the way to Jericho to be drowned."

"Who?—what for?"

"I don't know what for, but the worthy man's name was Herod."

"I cannot really see the value of the intelligence you have brought from the Holy Land."

"But Aunt can."

Miss Nares did. Or at least she saw enough to discover a blow at her favourite tenets. There was one way to parry it; and there is none easier for a disputant. She assumed a contrary position: "there *must* have been water some feet deep at Jerusalem."

"Well then the Jews were amphibious animals while there, for no one ever died in the water. You know I proved the other day that the strongest man was not Sampson, but Joannes de Dooper, as the Dutch Bible calls him; for, besides compressing time, he lifted up and down thousands of people in a day, without intermission of speaking."

"Ridicule is no test of truth."

"Good! I like quotations. I'll give you another discovery, in return."

"Reserve the benefit of your discoveries for yourself"—said Mr. Morley who rose from the sofa to the surprise and mortification of the youth. Thurston was nettled. He had read that morning in a writer of his Aunt's denomination, a positive proof that when the rite which was the subject of their frequent disputes was performed by, "primitive Christians," in the way she deemed scriptural, the subject of the ordinance was always naked. This was demonstration to him that the practice could

not have originated in purest times, violating, as it did, the laws of decency and decorum. 'To lose this argument just at the time, when his Aunt was getting into a *feeze*, was vexatious: just at the time, too, when he had caught Maria's attention by something new. And when he was about to shew that an ordinance which may be altered to suit publick sentiment, in after days, could have had no essential manner prescribed for it.'——'It was the loss of a triumph,' thought Thurston. 'It was the protection of peace,' thought his father. And neither was satisfied with the conduct of the other.

It was no easy matter for Mr. Morley to discover the exact line of duty in regard to his son. It was indeed plainly necessary to prohibit the practice of disputation in his family. And this he did. But it was a kind of sullen peace that followed. One of the parties, at least, thought it unnecessary. "It was an infringement of his natural liberty. The complexion of the family appeared altered. Every thing was sadly different from former years: and all this is the effect of religion." Mr. Morley was again obliged to reason. And Thurston looked around for new objections.

Oh that the caviller would remember the quality of the weapon that he handles! It

may not strike deep,—but it seldom fails to recoil on him who wields it. Nor is it a security to the caviller that he means not, or believes not all that he says. There is danger in the stroke that is meant as a feint. He who is jealous of his holy truth suffers none to trifle with it unharmed.

Such was the experience of Thurston Morley. He had no faith in the objections which he sometimes advanced to his father. He could have refuted them all, himself. But he had now acquired a greater disrelish of spiritual things. It had commenced in the separate interests of the family. Prejudice carried on its work of discoloration; and religion lost its external semblance of loveliness. The habit of defending error, if it did not convince him in its favour, left many of the impressions of prejudice which error produces. The habit of cavilling gave an obliquity to his reasonings, even when alone. He became an active fabricator of suppositions. His natural ingeniousness forsook him.—So true is it that falsehood, like all other vice, is never a subject of disporting with impunity.—Every hint in his spiritual behalf was repelled. The hour of family devotion was, of all others, most unwelcome.

The Revival ceased. And the dews of Heaven which had fallen so copiously on the village of —— left Thurston Morley unmoistened among the crowd.

In the meanwhile a change was going on under that roof, of a very different nature. The fire, whose effects were so visible before, burnt with a violence as it consumed the last of all that was once buoyant in the bosom of Maria. Lights and shadows were no longer alternates. A dense darkness was within and around her; and it overcast all who approached her. Yet unknown to them, her faculties were chained, prisoner-like, to a single thought. They only knew that she appeared loosened from earth—on the ready spring to enter eternity.

Who has not witnessed the power of natural affection growing in its strength before dissolution has parted its object from time? Who has not marked the collecting of sympathy, its yearnings, and its unwearying care, in such season as this?"

The approaching departure of one so dear was a vortex that swallowed the thoughts of all. Divisions and differences were nearly forgotten—save by one.

All hopes of Maria's recovery were abandoned, reluctantly, but fully. The distinguish-

able steps in her disorder were all taken but the last. Her evening walk had been forsaken—her place at the family board was vacant: the couch of her chamber was left—and her bed had now only to relinquish her in turn, to the tenement of the dead.

By her own desire, the family altar had been removed to her room. She felt that her social worshipping on earth was nearly over; and her heart expressed its breathing with renewed fervour as she followed the pious leadings of her father, or the dulcet harmony of her sister's voice.

It was one evening after such a season as this, that Maria beckoned the family to the side of her bed. The summons was unusual; and it was alarming. This she saw and relieved. "I am not dying,—said she, taking the hand of Clara,—I am not even conscious of the approach of death. I am feeble, but I have no suffering. One care is an inmate of my heart, and I can retain it there no longer. I believe I have been wrong. I have contended against the sweetest feelings of my nature. My conscience has been treacherous; or I have reasoned it into perversion. The only boon on earth I now could ask cannot be granted. Had we lived together we should have met at the

festival of love—why have I suffered this parting ?"——And she sunk exhausted by the effort of body and mind.

A terrible struggle shook the watchful Thurston: it broke forth in a vent of vehemence—"bigotry is gone—but not until its victim was slain ?"—and with a rush that shook the apartment, and a deep audible groan he passed from the chamber.

Mr. Morley followed him. The son repeated his expression, with a stare of wildness. The father gazed on him for a moment——"Thurston !——you are wrong. But if you were not, be careful that bigotry slay not a *soul.*"

It was two days after this, when the head of the family had opened the Bible at the usual hour of devotion, that a slight sound was heard from the bed of the patient————Maria Morley was no more !

WILL NOT THE SAINTS COMMUNE TOGETHER IN HEAVEN ?

THE AGED SINNER.

"FATHER!"—said a low tremulous voice at the bedside of Mr. Norton—"Father, I feel distressed for you. I cannot rest."—It was the hour of midnight. And the speaker who interrupted the slumbers of her parent was a sweet child of fourteen. She had already dropped upon her knees at the side of her confounded father: and, before his efforts at self-recollection were complete, had commenced a prayer in his behalf. He listened astonished at the fluency of the young petitioner. It was a new and unexpected scene; but his attention was chained by the language of simple and artless eloquence. He saw and heard a youthful heir of Heaven pleading with an emboldened energy, and with all the simple eloquence of nature, for the thoughtless soul of her parent. He shuddered at the simple index of his danger: and without knowing that he had articulated a word, he responded—"God grant it," to the "amen" of the filial suppliant. "Father"—she said, and she would have spoken again, had not a prohi-

bition from one she was accustomed to obey sealed her opening lips. "Retire my child,—do not awaken your mother—retire;" and the door opened and closed again with as little noise as the light footsteps of the affectionate intruder. I know not how far a spirit of adventure might be ascribed to this unseasonable transaction, by those who understood little of the anxiety which caused it: or how much of it would be attributed to the fanciful actings of an excited imagination. But I know from his own confession, that the slumbers of that night were lost to the eyes of her father, and that the sternest realities remained in the posture of warning, and caught his sight when sounds had ceased. I know that there he lay struggling to escape from a conscience that swelled to giant's size, and giant's strength, shapeless but terrible. Thinking was agony: to cease to think was impossible. Still there was nothing defined, nothing distinct, in the character of his thoughts. The forms of past crimes stood not before him: no distinct charges were audible. There was a confused mass of terrors; but like ten thousand witnesses accusing without order or rule, it was terrific from its terrific interminglings. Oh, there are hours when sensitiveness writhes under agony far past that of the singlings out of

remorse: hours when the clear discrimination of guilt would be an alleviation of pain——

> "The past a blank, the future black
> With glimpses of a dreary track;
> Like lightning on the desert path
> When midnight storms are gathering wrath:"

hours, when the very companionship of accusing crime were comparatively welcome to the solitary and defenceless feelings. But then, their reign is short. The spirit disenthralls itself from the government of horror: and all that was, remained only as the memory of a fearful dream—an uncourted review. They are only as the mountains left by the traveller, misty in the distance, diminished, indistinct,—until they are lost from the sight. Their terror is in the present: they extend but little to the future. And like all other seasons of mental suffering, they leave no permanent instruction. So it was here: the darkness of the mind departed with the shadows of the night, and kept equal pace with their gradual dispersion.——The family assembled at breakfast as usual. Four daughters and a son-in-law, recently married, with the heads of the household, made up the domestic group. No parental prayer had opened the duties of the morning: and no parental voice craved a blessing on the well-spread table. Mr. Norton was cheerful

as he had been at the supper hour. He recollected, and told some amusing incidents of the preceding day: and he laughed heartily at the ludicrous folly of a neighbour. It is true he hardly spoke to Amelia: and a sagacious spectator might have observed even a careful averting of his face from the direction of her seat. But then Amelia was not sorry for the neglect. With a saddened heart she shrunk from observation; and she was pleased that the loquacity of her father diverted all notice from her own languor and depression of spirit. The circle broke up. The gentlemen left the house for the ordinary business of the day. The young ladies entered upon their usual avocations of domestic duty. Amelia was in a different division of engagement. She retired to her chamber to ruminate over the past. From the hour in which she had left her father on the last night, she had anticipated the next meeting with him, in a state of mingled doubt, hope and fear. He was not offended then, for he had spoken mildly, and had responded to her prayer. Perhaps he might even be thoughtful, for God could soften a heart, which the sun of neglected privilege had hardened. And it is sometimes sweet to think what God *can* do: it is so near believing what He *will* do. But

then her father might be ashamed of the weakness of that memorable hour; and he might look on her with a frown; and she could bear any thing better than a parental frown. So passed the lagging hours of darkness. Every minute brought up a new speculation, or renewed an old one: save when it returned to the Giver of time, laden with an ejaculation for the soul of her father. But now all that was over, and the meeting for whose doubtful issue she had trembled was likewise past; but with a reversal of all her calculations. Her father did *not* meet her with a frown: he took no notice of her entrance into the parlour. He was *not* thoughtful: he was light and free as air. Was the scene of the midnight hour real—or was it visionary? Could all that have passed in her sleep? And was she the sole actress, while fancy furnished the appendages?—There are agencies gone by with all of us, which seem so flatly contradicted by unexpected consequences, that we look on them as fantastic rather than real. It was so with Amelia Norton. She could not easily believe it possible, that no positive effect should result from her visit to the chamber. But then her recollection was vivid and faithful. "God grant it!" was still fresh in her ear. She had caught the *sharp*

glance of her father's eye with the dim light of the taper: it was unmoistened, but she had never seen it more intent. No; there was no delusion. But there was a mystery, dark, perplexing and unaccountable still. Amelia was not too young for all these reasons, and nature had been liberal in her gift of a strong understanding: and had it not been so, who has not seen how the powers of the mind may strengthen, when they are collected to play on a point, around which the affections of the heart have rallied! Its discrimination is then clear, and its instructions furbished.

I am not sure that a zeal for the conversion and salvation of others is a certain evidence of sincerity in religion, unless I can trace it to a source that is holy and pure. But I am very sure, that where no interest is awakened in the bosom in behalf of those who are dear there is a radical defect for which no other apparent virtues can atone. There is a generosity and benevolence, which arises like an instinctive principle in the bosom, wholly independent of the precepts which are designed to encourage it. It is too expansive for selfish enjoyment: it is too liberal for solitary pleasure. Social as the harmony and bliss of Heaven, it would mingle and diffuse: it would gather around it

a fraternity of its own. And natural affection, powerful as might have been its exercise under its former dominion, receives a new and vigorous impulse under the government of grace. "Children love your parents" may be comparatively vague, until the heart becomes preceptive, and the ordinary law of nature is enforced by a new argument and feeling. Or where an affectionate temper was an effective commandment before, grace gives it new vigour, intenseness and delicacy. Piety is love. Love caught from the spirit which expanded over the realm of a fallen world, and sought the redemption of its suffering creatures. And yet it has its variations too. For like the magnetic needle it has its great point of attraction. It vibrates with the attractions and affinities of kindred. It looks to God and to the good that divine mercy would achieve, while it yields to impulses from a neighbouring cognate. And yet the figure may be false. I am willing to relinquish it. There must be something right in the disposition which leads us first to desire the salvation of a relative, before we have far stretched our desire to those of common claims on our sympathy. It must be something direct between us and the great object of attraction. It cannot be uncongenial with the feelings of

Him towards a people whom he had loved from the beginning, to whom its heart gave its first yearnings, and for whom he said to the Apostles—"Beginning at Jerusalem."

The sisters of Amelia had been members of the visible church some years before the recent change of her own affections, and time had been when they understood something of the desires which agitated her bosom. But that season was over; or at least the anxiety which distinguished it was gone. They did indeed desire the spiritual welfare of their parent. But that interest had never awakened a solicitude deep as that of Amelia. And who does not know that it is possible ever for the Christian to remit in the zeal which distinguished the hours of his "first love." When prayer seemed to have been unanswered, and all personal efforts have failed, discouragement and a kind of painless despair for the present ensue: a vague hope for an indefinite future, and a commitment of the whole matter, with diminished interest, into the hands of God. A resignation not unlikely to excite self-flattery, but generally ominous of a devotional decline, and generally characteristic of a temper fitful in its seasons and feelings.

There are few speculations, in which Christians more commonly indulge than that of the probable effects of piety on a given character. How often, when I have seen the generous and aspiring mind expending its energies, and wasting its fires on an object of sense, have I thought what an addition there were to the revenue of the Redeemer's glory, if that ambition ennobled by grace, and those talents hallowed by a sanctified taste, were brought, like the gifts of an eminent Apostle, to the altar of gratitude and love! And where I have seen an inherent patience and docility, if they were leavened by a principle that is divine. Or where I have marked a steadiness of enterprize—if its end where the cause of Jehovah. And when such speculations have failed, how often have I been tempted rather to ascribe the failure to an error in the supposed change, than the fallibility of cherished hope! Grace corrects the natural characteristics; it does not destroy them. It changes the channel of the passions, it never arrests their flow. It converts to some use, and tranforms its diversified gifts, the varieties of character which distinguish the intelligent creation: and who can doubt that this very variety will distinguish heaven, and form the same changes of a moral harmo-

ny which give a charm to the symphonies of musick.

There was a *naivete* in the character of Amelia Norton, united with an archness which had usually rendered her the life of the family; and her sisters had often conversed on the probable effects of piety on a mind of such a mould. And now that the truth of conjecture was tested, it was plain that they were not far mistaken. In the early days of her piety, there was a beautiful union of almost infantile ingenuousness and ardour. It reminded of the comprehensive and touching expression of the Apostle—"new-born babes:" confiding, impressible, unsuspicious and credulous. But with all there was a solidity which reflection seemed to have imparted, and a gradual vanishing of those lighter materials, which gave an air of weakness, while they made up a part of external embellishment. It was not the first, nor was it the last time that I have seen the beautiful process of a new appropriation of natural characteristics. I have loved to behold the substance of nature wrought into a workmanship of grace, purified by the process, and sweetly attempered with dispositions of heavenly origin; until there stood before me a transformed being—a spectacle of moral re-

surrection, where grossness had given way to spirituality, and a celestial light was reflected around. Or if indeed all be not perfect, and there remain excrescences which mar, and remind of what formerly was; charity—an involuntary charity, covers them all, and a holy hope antedates the hour when neither blemish nor stain shall disfigure the workmanship of God. And I have loved, too, to watch the slower progress of a sanctifying power, where less ductile and less pliable materials were to be the subjects of change; or where habit had given them a firmness, and ungoverned passions had rendered them unbending and perverse. And it was instructive to see how the circumstances of life were meeted out by omniscient wisdom to fit the defects, and correct the evils of fallen humanity; how affection broke the rocky temper; and bereavement snapped the string that tied the heart to an object of earth, and fastened it again to Heaven: how disappointment transferred the fixed eye from the dust on which it rested, to the great end of spiritual creation: and who has not watched, or seen, or felt all this, in the mysterious agency of his own experience. And who has not thought how fitting an employment in a higher sphere, it shall be, when in

the review of our probation here we understand the minute management and dealing of the Holy Spirit on earth, Jesus Christ himself being the interpreter? And whom has not a holy resolution invigorated, when in vicissitude or sorrow he has remembered the language of the Interpreter, "what I do thou knowest not now but thou shalt know hereafter?"

It is not always easy to measure grades in the high destiny which awaits the christian; yet I have sometimes thought them as distinguishable as the movements of a traveller. It is not always possible to distinguish the light breaking full on the darkness of nature in obedience to the divine fiat; and yet I have sometimes seen the transition, when it appeared to break like a blaze—and it was so in the instance of Amelia Norton. From the first hour of new hope no one could have overlooked the moral change which shone through her whole appearance, diffused itself into, and even dignified, her manner. There was vivacity, but it was qualified: cheerfulness, but it was controlled: confidence, but it was unobtrusive: simplicity, but it was reflecting: a character which art had not sophisticated, and which intelligence and piety were hereafter to complete. All this her sisters saw and appreciated. The altered Amelia lost none of that claim to fa-

vouritism, which she had unwittingly established. But not one of the family had entered so deeply into the familiarities of her heart, as to discover her cherished and powerful emotions in behalf of her father. A few words of disquietude she had uttered; and they were responded with a faint echo. It was in secret she indulged in musings which led to a heaviness of heart—the first heaviness, apart from conviction of sin, she had ever known. And it was in secret she indulged a sanguineness of anticipation, in proportion to the fervour of her prayers.

A good old writer has undertaken to answer the question—"how may we certainly know when God is about to grant our prayer?" I should be afraid of it. I should think it hazardous to attempt deciding, when the Holy Spirit has left us no rule. There may be a confidence of faith, there may be a fervour of breathing; there may be a sensible nearness to the Great Hearer of prayer; and yet may expectation die in all the fruitlessness of the object sought. Faithful prayer will always be answered. But that uniformity will be in favour of the petitioner himself. The relative to whom affection fondly clings, and for whom holy expectations are born in the bosom, may

still stand aloof and afar from the covenant of grace, while those yearnings of a pious pleader bring down a blessing upon himself. The "thorn in the flesh" may abide while mercies of a character unsolicited are shed upon the soul. The efficacy of prayer consists not always in the attainment of its object, even when such an attainment seems not forbidden as a principle of desire.

One evening in the absence of Mr. Norton, intelligence of the death of an acquaintance was communicated by one of the family, and it was rendered of more interest by an account of the tranquility and peace with which she had closed a life of usefulness. It was the starting point of a conversation in which all equally shared.

"It must have required a high degree of faith," said the brother-in-law, to whom I shall give the name of Sewald, in lieu of his own,— "it must have required a high degree of faith, to have sustained her when she was leaving an unfilial and reprobate son."

"Yes, but are we sure," said Caroline," that there were not some trying moments in the separation. She departed without an answer to the most frequent of her prayers; and without realizing an object to which her fondest hopes had been looking for years. I do not think it

necessary to suppose a finished success to our hopes, in order to die happy. Thousands of instances occur in which the parent departs without comfort in a child, and yet blesses the hand that beckons him away. I do not mean that the Christian will always die in triumph; nor that the experience of a last hour is a fair ordeal of faith. Trials may accompany the child of God to the ripplings of Jordan. A constitutional gloom may cover his hours. It was so with the sweet Christian bard of England. And it is so with many a saint like spirit now. The constitutional temperament may be diseased: and religion is not always a remedy for disorders of mind which arise from the imperfection of the body. Much of our spiritual despondency may have its source in these. Besides, subjected as we are to continual conflicts in a state of probation, we have no special promise to be delivered from them in the moment of death. Grace will be equal to our day: and it will sustain us through. But although it will bring us off conquerors in the end; we may not be without a painful struggle in the critical hour. The heavenly voice, which said "fear not to go down, for I will go down with thee," will accompany the believer, until it addresses him where encouragement is needed no more.

But it would demand the agency of a miracle, to preserve him from temptations which are inseparable from our present condition."

"And yet," said Amelia, "do not the ministers of the Gospel describe the death hour of the believer as one of the principal attractions of piety?" "They do so, and they are equally general in their description of the last moments of the impenitent. We have some judicious exceptions to such a practice; but its frequency is to be lamented. Even christians are sometimes led to pass judgement on the deceased, where trials of mind, or torpor of body, have prevented the full exercise of faith. We are already too much disposed to look rather for comfort than for sanctification in our daily experience. But the evil becomes additionally serious, when we are half established in a rule of expectation for a departing hour. In both cases we are liable to lose the object by a disproportionate intentness on it, and a consequent neglect of the means of securing it. And hence on the other side, many an impenitent sinner derives consolation from the unmarked and quiet dissolution of an acquaintance, whose prospect in life was no better than his own."——

"But I return," said Amelia, "to the case of Mrs. Stanley. It was certainly a powerful instance of faith, when she so freely relinquished what she had so long promised herself in the sight of a converted child. Would she not necessarily retain an assurance that her prayers might be answered hereafter?"

"Perhaps," replied Mrs. N. "not quite an assurance. She died as she lived—with the breathing of prayer; and it was a consolation to her to know that God has answered many of his children long after he had received them to glory. But it does not always follow that a full confidence and persuasion of that answer are communicated to the believer."

The conversation had now reached the confines of a topic which awakened all the curiosity and solicitude of Amelia. It was with eagerness she rejoined—"yet, my dear Mother, has not God *promised* to answer the faithful prayers of his people?"

"He has so. But the answer may neither be in the season nor manner which we may have expected; and it may not be even the precise object. I have no doubt the Apostle Paul prayed in faith, when he thrice besought the Lord to remove an affliction which harrassed him. He was heard with complacency, and

graciously sustained in the suffering; but although he was richly blessed, the boon was withheld."

"True; but it was not consistent with the divine will to remove the thorn in the flesh; and we believe it may not have been best for the Apostle himself. Now that does not apply to a prayer for a relative. God desires the salvation of all; and he bids us pray for all."

"Right, Amelia, and it is an encouragement which we ought to appropriate to ourselves. We have known instances of the faithfulness of the Great Hearer of prayer in the circle of our own acquaintance. We have read of many others. Although God has promised blessings to his people, and will assuredly redeem his promise, still he says of them every one, as he said of the promises long since—"yet for all these will I be inquired of." It is prayer which renders us in a fit state to receive the favour, without which it will not be conferred; or if conferred, would lose its character and its worth."

"That has been my impression; and yet I have sometimes been in serious doubt, when I remember that an Adam, a Noah, an Abraham and a David, not to mention others, have had reprobate children: and especially when the

Apostle Paul appears to attach uncertainty to all that we can do, when he says—'what knowest thou whether thou shalt save thy husband, what knowest thou whether thou shalt save thy wife?' he certainly means that the husband or wife is to act in faith, and yet he leaves the event in mere possibility."

"I would answer that the secret will of God is not the rule of our actions. The bare possibility of the salvation of an immortal soul is in the highest degree encouraging: and not less so is his sympathy with our sorrows, his interest in our spiritual cares, his participation in our anxiety for others, so much resembling his own when on earth, and so near akin to the very ministry of Angels." "Oh yes! it is a delightful thought! and yet"——Amelia's eye betrayed emotion as she added, in the tone of a melting appeal—"and yet the bare *possibility*, that one for whom nature taught us to feel and instructed us how to plead—oh I cannot realize it. I have once said that the saints will know each other in Heaven—will they not know who is missing too? The shadow of one dreadful thought reaches into eternity."

"But is it right," said Sewald, "to indulge in such thoughts? They are chilling to our faith: they create a discouragement which con-

fuses our own spiritual prospects. There is every thing in the mercy and goodness of God to promote a holy confidence in him. With the assurance of this we should leave all events where they must rest at last, in his own hands. In a world of future happiness, nothing of the past will contract our pleasure, no painful recollections will embitter it, no vacancy of heart will connect with it a sense of imperfection."

"Yes;" added Caroline, "I have frequently reflected on the expression of our minister, when he preached from the words—"*there will be no night there*"—the serene of Heaven will be dimmed by no care. Every affection of the soul shall be absorbed, every faculty engrossed, and every tie, of which it is susceptible, held forever by a powerful and all-pervading attraction. The expanse of Heaven is too wide to restrict the range of an immortal spirit, its varieties too illimitable to pall on the pure appetite, its intelligence too vast to confine the activity of an exalted intellect. No night will be there, 'nor cloud, nor speck, nor stain.' No reminiscence of the past will painfully arrest the career of feeling and mind. Gratitude, knowledge and love will fill the enlarged chambers of heart and soul."

"Well repeated!" said another sister. "Caroline is no listless hearer; and to me there seems a powerful incentive to faith in a reflection so reviving: and perhaps even more: united with a humble dependence on God, and a confiding relinquishment of our burden into the hands of the Redeemer, it appears adapted to give a right direction to our desires, while by a reflex action it renders them the instruments of promoting our own present happiness."

Amelia thought not so. She professed not to understand the nature of the "reflex action:" but she could well comprehend how diminishing certainties could diminish her faith. She would have reduced the subject on a narrower circle of reasons. She would have allowed nothing provisional, nothing trammelled with conditions. The most prominent member of the family was devoid of piety; alien to the hopes of her own bosom, and disparted from all that was most congenial to her. On the other hand, the same Almighty arm, which had levelled her former feelings of self-complacency with the dust, and raised her sunken spirit again, was strong as ever. The same grace which had refreshed her own spirit in its languishing flowed still from its exhaustless fount.

And it shall continue to flow, while their is pollution on our smitten earth, or while there remains a single unsentenced sinner aloof from his God. All this Amelia would have said, for she thought it all with the rapidity which emotion gives to the mind, and which passes an argument in sight before it could be invested with half its clothing of words: which forms and retracts a position in the twinkling of an eye, and hurries the power of reflection without a consciousness of haste.

But the object which gave life to her reasoning entered the apartment. The change which the conversation must now necessarily take was unwelcome to Amelia, though far less so to others. They saw her approach to a ground which it would have been painful to traverse, and which was never without agitation under the foot of its occupant. But to her at that time it was stable, and all utterly disconnected with it was unprofitable and vapid. She carried the idea of her father's conversion, parallel with her own being, into devotion and meditation. It made up a part of her very existence, and gave a colour to every figment of fancy.

It is not always practicable to shift the subject of a social conversation suddenly: and

where it is interrupted, as in the present instance, by the entrance of an addition to the party, there is a feeling of disingenuousness in any attempt to do so: a consciousness of art, which no man but an accustomed manœuverer can permit without a sense of shame.

Mr. Norton accordingly remarked a contrast between the silence on his entrance, and the mingling of voices which he had heard in the hall. A similar change had been observable twice before. He had then thought less of it. But the repetition of the circumstance was in ill accordance with the state of his mind. He had been engaged in a matter of some importance and perplexity: and had expected to lose his cares in the cheerfulness of his family. And for the most part such an expectation had been hitherto realized. If ever deference was paid to the happiness of a father by children, it was imminently so here. They met his views, and they anticipated his wishes, whenever they could consistently do so: and it is not impossible that even the strict rules of Christian consistency were sometimes forgotten, or inconsiderately sacrificed to filial affection.

It is a hard duty which conscience has to discharge, when all the feelings of natural affection are enlisted against her: feelings which

are recommended to the understanding and the heart, and a neglect of which nature sets down as treason against herself. And then how amiable seem the reasonings which the occasion elicits! The happiness of the father is only of this world. To him there should be nothing repulsive in *home*. Before him religion should wear her loveliest attire of cheerfulness—the holliday suit, that instead of repelling shall win!—And then the Sabbath—oh there is not in the range of domestic temptations one that approaches more furtively to the practice, than a desecration of the Sabbath, under the sway and example of parental worldliness. Where there is not an utter contempt of religious principle, and an off-casting of all dread of the future, consecrated time comes heavy to the impatience of the worldly. Or, where there is a remnant of principle left from the instructions of childhood, which imposes a slight restriction on unholy inclinations, how cheerless is the law which prescribes holiness to the Sabbath! How reproving the retirement of others! How monotonously dull all order and regulation! But to be left alone for hours, or to witness the more profitable occupation of others repugnant as it is to our own taste—who can endure it? To see at such seasons "the sanctified air"

commenced with the dawn of day, deepened by the service of the Temple, and darkened into complete unsociability as the day was waning by"——"all this" said Mr. Norton, "is the effect of superstition, not of religion." And he had said so years before Amelia understood the experience of piety: and that saying had become a law passed upon the deportment of the household. And never were subjects more carefully obedient: never was compromise more carefully made: never was an effort more uniform and strict, to settle conflicting claims.

But now a new revolution had taken place. Amelia had become the character we have already described. Not a sally of wit had she displayed for weeks. She uniformly as ever met the embraces of her father on his entrance; and she did so more ardently than ever. But then her eye was often downcast, and there was an earnestness in her manner, which ill-comported with the levity which formerly distinguished her, indicating that all on her part was not told. Her cheerfulness too wore the mien rather of suppressed seriousness than of genuine hilarity. The quick sighted parent detected all this, but he was far from conjecturing the cause. And the delicate and affecting disclosure, which had followed his inquiry, revealed the most unwel-

come intelligence which had ever reached him from his family. * * * * * *

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[To this point in this interesting sketch had the beloved and lamented Author arrived,—in this affecting development of domestic character was he engaged, when the angel of death suddenly called him away from all his labours to his eternal rest. It is a precious fragment, replete with most touching and tender associations. It may be regarded as the closing act of a life devoted to the noblest purposes—the last effort to do good of a spirit just taking wing for Heaven. The most elaborate and finished production of the same admirable pen could hardly have been more moving and impressive than this mere commencement of a disclosure of evangelical history, whose farther incidents, results and lessons of instruction and admonition are covered by the veil which separates time from eternity. No mortal man can unfold the whole design of this unfinished Etching, nor adequately describe the attractive charms of devoted piety, and the fearful consequences of confirmed worldliness and hardened impenitence, which its completion would have vividly and strikingly disclosed. A request was indeed made on the bed of death, that a friend, who had enjoyed the Author's confidence in relation to this volume, would pursue the design and complete the sketch. That friend has deciphered the short-hand copy with scrupulous care and exactness without changing a thought or form of expression. But he declines making any addition; believing that the great object, in the writer's view, that of giving an affecting moral lesson and exerting a hallowed influence upon the heart, would be most effectually accomplished, by presenting it to the reader just as it was left by the loved hand which now moulders in the dust. Let it remain a broken column,—fit memorial of the hopes that were blas-

ted, the prospects that were darkened and the hearts that were smitten and desolated by the premature death of its Author.

It may be proper to state that this volume was composed expressly for publication in Europe, and without the Author's name. Previously to his last sickness, however, he had been prevailed upon to consent to its being published anonymously in this country. It is now deemed proper that his name should accompany the work, as the reasons for concealment exist no longer.]

A. W. L.

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